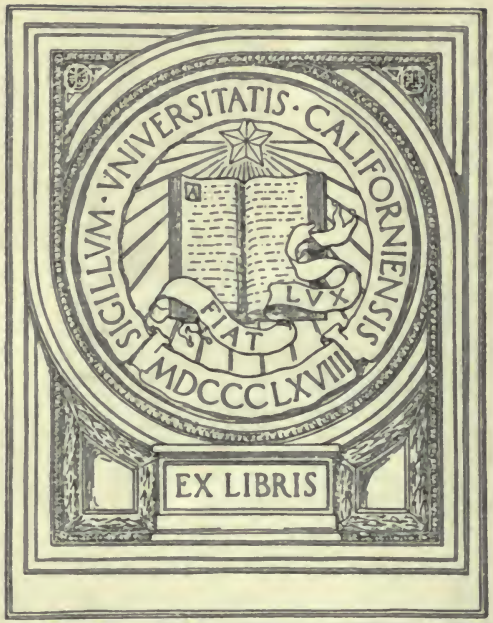
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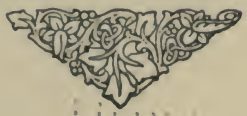
She sat alone now, gazing out across the hills.
[PAGE 312]

THE WAY OUT

BY

EMERSON HOUGH



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EMERSON HOUGH

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To
JAMES ALEXANDER BURNS
Prophet of His People

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BOOK I

THE WAY OUT

CHAPTER I

THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

"HUSH! Stop it, Davy. He's a-comin'!"

The old woman who spoke—a wrinkled dame she was, bowed down by years and infirmity, her face creased by a thousand grimed-in, wrinkled lines—moved with an odd sprightliness as she stepped across the floor. She placed a hand upon the shoulder of the young man whom she accosted, standing between him and the door of the little cabin of which they were the only occupants.

The young man turned toward her, smiling half dreamily. He was a tall man, as his outstretched legs, one crossed over the other, would attest; a man well developed, muscular and powerful. His gray eyes seemed now half a-dream, his wide mouth fixed itself in pleasant lines, so that he seemed far away, somewhere in the lands to which music offers access. For now he had been engaged in the production of what perhaps might have been called music. It was an old ballad tune he had been playing on his violin, and but

now his grandam had joined in high and cracking treble on the old air of "Barbara Allen," known time out of mind in these hills. It was the keener ear of the old woman which first had caught warning of approaching danger.

"Take keer, I say!" she repeated, and shook him impatiently. "I tell ye I heerd him come in at the lower gate. He'll be here direckly. Git shet of that fiddle, boy!"

She bent on him a pair of deep-set hazel eyes, sharp as those of some wild creature. Her voice had in it a half-masculine dominance. Every movement of her stooped and broken body bespoke a creature full of resolution, fearless, fierce.

"Gawd knows why he's back so soon," she went on, "but he's here. Give him time to turn old Molly loose and git a few years of corn, an' he'll be right in. Onct he hears that fiddle he'll raise trouble, that's what he'll do. I reckon I know a preacher, an' most of all yore daddy. For him thar hain't nothin' sinfuller'n a fiddle; he's pizen on 'em—all preachers is—him wust of all. What does he know about music? Now, if he was French an' Irish, like me, it mought be different. But then——"

"I kain't hep it, Granny," said the young man, still slowly, still unchanged, his fingers still trailing across the strings. "'Barbara Allen'—do ye call that wicked, even on a Sunday? Besides, this is the fust time I've

ever strung this fiddle up full. I couldn't git the strings till jest now. Melissa says——"

"Never mind what Meliss' says neither—she's a triflin' sort, even if she is yore own wife. For all that, ye'd orter be home this minute, like enough."

"As if ye understood!" said the young man, sighing now and dropping the instrument to his knee. For the first time a shade of sadness crossed his face, giving to his features a certain sternness and masculine vigor.

"Why shouldn't I understand, Davy? Listen—ye hain't for these hills. Ye're a throw-back somehow, ye don't belong here. I say that, though yore daddy is my own son. Don't I know him—he'd skin us alive if he found us two here fiddlin' on Sunday atternoon. He certainly would shake us out over hell fire, boy! When he gits started to exhortin' and damnin' around here, he certainly is servigerous. Ye know that. Hist, now!"

The young man himself now heard the sound of heavy footsteps slopping on the sodden earth, the slam of the slat gate's wooden latch as someone entered. There followed the stamp of heavy feet on the broken gallery, where evidently someone was stopping for an instant to kick off the mud.

Before the newcomer could enter the young man arose, and with one stride gained the opening that led up to the loose-floored loft of the single-storied

log house. He reached up a long arm and laid the offending fiddle back out of sight upon the floor.

Just as he turned there entered the person against whose advent he had been warned—a tall man, large of frame, bushy and gray-white of hair and as to a beard whose strong, close-set growth gave him a look of singular fierceness. As he stood he might have seemed fifty years old. In reality he was past seventy. The young man who faced him now—his son—was twenty-eight. A stalwart breed this, housed here in this cabin in a cove of the ancient Cumberlands. The old dame who stood now, her eyes turning from one to the other, would never see her ninetieth birthday again.

Andrew Joslin, commonly known through these half-dozen mountain communities where he rode circuit as "Preacher Joslin," stood now in the door of his own home and looked about him with his accustomed sternness—a sternness always more intense upon the Lord's Day. A somber, dour nature, that of this mountain minister, whose main mission in life was to proclaim the wrath of God. A man of yea, yea, and nay, nay, one must have said who saw him standing now, his gray eyes looking out fiercely, searchingly, beneath his bushy brows.

"What ye been doin'?" he asked suspiciously now. indifferently of the old woman, his mother, and the stalwart young man, his own son. "What ye doin'

here, David? Why hain't ye home? Why hain't ye at church to-day, like ye'd orter be?"

"Thar's no sarvices nowhars near here, an' ye know it, Andrew," said the old woman somewhat querulously.

"Thar kin be sarvices anywhar whar a few is gethered together in the name of the Lord. Ye two right here could hold sarvices for the glory of God, if so as ye wanted to."

Neither made answer to him, and he went on:

"David, have ye read all of that thar book I give ye? Ye'd orter git some good outen Calvin's Institutes. Ye'll maybe be a preacher some time like yore daddy."

"Well, daddy, I done tried to read her. I set up all one night with Preacher Cuthbertson from over in Owsley, an' we both read sever'l chapters in them Institutes. Hit was nigh about midnight when we both went to sleep, an' atter I'd went to sleep he done shuk me by the shoulder an' woke me up, an' he says to me, 'David, David, I've been thinkin' over them Institutes so hard . . . I believe they've injured my mind'!"

The young man broke into a wide-mouthed smile as he made this recountal. But it was a thundercloud of wrath upon the face of his father which greeted such levity.

"Ye wasn't reverent!" he blazed. "Ye was im-

pyous, both of ye. Injure his mind—why, that feller Cuthbertson never had no mind fer to injure. That's what ails him. The book of John Calvin is one of the greatest books in the world. What'll folks like ye and Preacher Cuthbertson be up an' sayin' next? An' I'd set ye apart for the ministry, too, allowin' I could git ye some schoolin' atter a while, somewhars."

He turned from them both, and stood a little apart, his brows drawn down into a scowling frown.

"How come ye come home so soon, Andrew?" asked his mother now. "We wasn't expectin' ye back—ye told me ye was a-goin' over to Leslie to preach a couple days on the head of Hell-fer-Sartin. But ye only left yisterday."

"Hit's none yore business how I got back so soon," replied the old man savagely. "I don't have to account to no one what I do."

He turned about now moodily. In his great hand he still clutched the heavy umbrella which he carried, its whalebone ribs and cotton cover dripping rivulets. A step or two brought him to the opening in the loft floor, where he reached up to place the wet umbrella out of the way. As he did so his hand struck some other object hidden there. He grasped it and drew it down—and stood, his face fairly contorted with surprise and anger.

It was his son's violin which now he clutched in his gnarled and bony hand. As he regarded it the emotion

on his face was as much that of horror as aught else. A violin, an instrument of hell, here in his house—his house—a chosen minister of God!

"What's this?" he demanded at length. "Tell me—how come this thing here—in my house!"

With one stride now—tearing away all the strings of the instrument with one grasp of his hand as he did so—he flung the offending violin full upon the flames in the fireplace, sweeping from him with an outward thrust of his great arm the tall figure of his son, who impulsively stepped forward to save his cherished instrument. As for the wrinkled old woman, she stood arrested in an attitude as near approaching fear as any she ever had evinced. She knew the fierce temper of both these men.

But the young man, the equal in height of his parent, his superior in strength, stayed his own impulse and lowered the clenched hand he had raised. Filial obedience, after all, was strong in his heart.

"That's whar it belongs!" exclaimed the older man, his eyes flashing. "In hell fire is whar all them things belongs, an' the critters that fosters 'em. My own flesh an' blood! O Lord God, lay not up this against thy sarvent!

"Ye have sinned against the Lord," he began, excited now in something of the religious fervor which had had no expenditure of late. He thrust a long, bony finger towards his son. "Ye an' yore granny

both have sinned. To Adam was give the grace of perseverin' in good if he choosed. Adam had the power if he had the will, but not the will that he mought have the power. It was give to all of us subserquents to have both the will an' the power fer to obstain from sin. But have ye two obstained? Look at that thing a-quoilin' up in hell. That's what comes to them that fosters evil when they have both the will an' the power, an' don't use neither."

They stood looking at him silently, and he went on, still more excited.

"Ye have-ah—tempted of the Lord," he intoned. "Ye have forgot the holy commandments of the Lord-ah! Ye have sinned in the sight of God on the holy Sabbath day-ah! Ye have kivered up yore sin from me, the sarvent of the Lord-ah! Ye have plotted agin me. Ye have no grace, fer grace is not offered by the Lord to be either received or rejected—it is grace that perjuces both the will an' the choice in the heart of man. But whar air the subserquent good works of grace? Ye don't show them. Ye nuvver had no grace, neither one of ye! The both of ye will quoil in hell like that thing thar."

"Tell me"—he turned now to the old dame—"was he a-fiddlin' here in my house on the Lord's day?"

"Yes, he war, an' it hain't the first time!" exclaimed the old woman. "I don't keer who knows it. He

war a-playin' 'Barbara Allen' here, an' I war a-singin' to it. Now ye know it, an' what air ye goin' to do about it?"

For a moment the three stood in tableau, strong, yet sad enough. Then the fierce soul of the old man flamed yet more.

"Disgrace me—in my own house! Out of my house, ye, an' never darken its doors agin! Yore wife and children need ye plenty 'thout ye comin' up here, fiddlin' in a preacher's house on Sunday."

"Do ye mean that, daddy?" asked the young man quietly. "Do ye reelly mean that? Maybe ye'd better think it over."

"I don't have to think it over," retorted the other. "Begone! Don't nuvver come here again."

"I reckon I'll go too," said the grandam, reaching out a skinny arm for the sunbonnet on its peg at the door.

"Ye'll do nothin' of the sort," replied her son savagely. "Ye belong here. Let him go. I sont his mother outen the same door onct."

"I know ye did, Andrew," she replied, her fierce eyes untamed as she faced him. "An' as good a womern as ever was in the world when she started, ontel ye cowed her an' abused her, an' sont her down the river —ye know whar, an' ye know into what. Ye kin preach till ye're daid, and shake me over hell fire all ye like, but ye kain't change me, an' ye kain't scare

me, an' ye know it almighty well. I'll stay here, an' I'll go when I git ready, an' ye know that."

"Go on, Davy." She turned to the young man who stood, gray and silent, his hand upon the half-opened door. "Take him at his word, an' don't ye nuvver come back here agin. If ye hain't happy in yore own home, git outen these mountings—git somewhars else. No matter what ye do, ye kain't do worsen what ye're doin' here. Ye know that yore maw nuvver flickered afore him—nor yore granny neither—an' don't ye."

The gray old man stood silent, at bay, in the center of the squalid little room—a room cluttered up with heavy, home-made chairs, a pair of corded bedsteads, a low board table; an interior lighted now in the approaching gloom of evening by nothing better than the log fire on the deep-worn hearth. It was an old, old room in an old, old house. The threshold of the door, renewed no man might say how often, was worn yet again to the bottom. Its hinges of wood were again worn half in two. The floor, made of puncheons once five inches thick, hewn by a hand-adze two generations ago from some giant poplar tree, now worn almost as smooth as glass by the polishing of bare feet—puncheons more than a yard wide each as they lay here on the ancient floor beams. A pair of windows, once owning glass, partially lighted the room, and there were two doors, one standing ajar at the farther end of the room making upon a covered pas-

sageway which led to a second cabin. In this usually went forward, it might be supposed, the cooking operations of the place, such as they were.

At length the old woman stepped to the side of the fireplace and kicked together the ends of the logs. A faint flame arose, now lighting up the interior of this half-savage abode. It showed all the better the tall form of the young man at the door. He spoke no more. With one last glance straight at the face of his father, he turned and passed out into the dusk.

The old man, suddenly trembling, now cast himself into a chair before the fire and sat staring into the flickering flames.

"Whar's my supper?" he demanded hoarsely after a time.

"Thar hain't none ready, an' ye know it," said his mother. "If I'd a-knowed ye war a-comin' back I mought have got something ready. What made ye?"

"Hit war the Lord's will," he rejoined. "I've met causes sufficient. The Lord brung me back to find out what was a-goin' on here, I reckon. The Sabbath, too!"

"Hit's no worse one day than another," said his mother. "Ye've druv yore own son outen yore own house. He's got no house of his own to go to, to speak of—God knows thar's little enough to keep him thar, that's shore. Thar's little enough to keep any of us here, come to that."

Her attitude certainly was not that of shrinking or fear. Granny Joslin was known far and wide through these mountains as the fightingest of the fighting Joslins; and that was saying much.

"Womern, womern!" The old preacher raised a hand in protest. There was a sort of weakening in his face and his attitude, a sort of quavering in his voice.

She turned and looked at him—looked at the floor where his chair sat before the fireplace. Beside the drip of the old umbrella there was another stain spreading on the floor now—darker than that which first had marked it; a stain which seemed to have darkened his garments and to have caked on his heavy, homemade shoes.

"What's that, Andy?" she asked imperiously, but knowing well enough what it was. "Who done that?"

He made no answer for a time, but at length remarked with small concern, "Why, old Absalom done that, that's who. He knifed me in the back when I was lookin' the other way atter his two boys."

"Ye taken the old hill trail, then?"

"Yes, it wasn't so slippy as the creek road up to Hell-fer-Sartin. Oh, I know I was warned outen thar, but I couldn't show the white feather, could I?"

"No, ye couldn't, not even if ye war a preacher." By this time she was busying herself caring for his wound.

"Well, that's how it come," went on Andrew Joslin. "I taken the hill trail turnin' off yander from the creek, like ye know. I met them up in the hills. The Lord led me to 'em, maybe. The Lord fotched me back here, too, to find what I have found. How have I sinned!"

"If ye didn't kill old Absalom Gannt ye shore have sinned," remarked his fierce dam casually. "Was it some fight they made?"

"Well, yes. Thar wasn't but me along, exceptin' Chan Bullock from over on the head of the Buffalo—we met up jest as I got up into the hills. When we turned down the head of Rattlesnake we run acrosst them people settin' under a tree, dry, an' playin' a game of keerds, right on the Lord's day. I rid up with my pistol in my hand, an' I says to them I didn't think they war a-doin' right to play keerds thar. I seen old Absalom thar, an' two of his boys and two of his cousins. Before I could say much to them, one of the boys he up and fired fust. He hit old Molly in the neck. She pitched some then, an' afore I could git her whar I could do anything, the feller that fired at me, he slipped over down the big bank back of him, an' got away in the bush. They had their horses thar, an' a couple of 'em jumped on horseback an' begun firin' at me, an' all the time old Molly was a-jumpin' so nobody could hit nobody offen her. Then come Chan Bullock ridin' up closeter to me. He had

along his old fifty-caliber Winchester—never could bear them big guns; they shoot too high. Well, he fired couple of times, an' missed, an' by that time all of Absalom an' his folks was on the run, either horseback er afoot.

"I seen the boy that done shot at me a-runnin' down the creek bed more'n a hundred and fifty yard away. I grabbed the gun away from Chan, an' I says, 'If I couldn't shoot no better'n ye kin I'd be ashamed o' myself.' So I taken a keerful aim—ye see, I helt a leetle ahead of him—an' when I pulls the trigger he rolls over about four times atter he hit the ground. I swear that big rifle must be a hard-hittin' gun—hit war a good two-hundred yard when I shot!

"Chan didn't have no pistol along, an' mine had fell on the ground. While all this war a-happenin', Absalom he had snuck back behint the tree whar they was a-settin' an' a-playin' keerds. Now, when my back was turned, he run out an' he cut me two er three times right here in the back, afore I could hep myself. Then he run off, too."

"An' ye didn't git 'im?"

"How could I? He run down the creek bed road towarge whar that other feller was. I covered him fair with Chan's gun—but she snapped on me. He hadn't had but a couple of hulls, an' I'd shot the last shot at Pete when I got him. So Absalom, he got away."

"Well, you see how come me to come home," he

added presently, having faithfully told his kin the full story of the latest combat. "I didn't know as I could git acrosst the mountings into Hell-fer-Sartin an' preach fer a couple days. Somehow it seemed to me I had orter come back home. I did—an', well you see what I've done found here. I didn't git Absalom. I've lost my son, David. Hit 'pears to me like I'm forsaken of the Lord this day!"

His mother made no comment, but stepped up to the mantel-piece and reached down a bottle of white liquid, from which she poured half a pint into a gourd which she found alongside the bottle.

"Drink this," said she. "We'll git Absalom some other time."

CHAPTER II

A NEW CREED

THE young man who had been dismissed from his father's house walked unmindful of the rain still falling in the evening gloom, nor looked back to the door now closed behind him. His face, strong and deeply lined, now had settled into a sternness which belied the half-humorous expression it but now had borne. He was wide of chest, broad of shoulder, straight of limb as he walked now, hands in pockets, straightforward, not slouching down, his back flat. There was little of apathy or weakness about him, one would have said. Well-clad, such a man as he would attract many a backward gaze from men—or women—on any city street.

He stepped straight down the little bank beyond the fence marking the delimitations of the scant yard and the little cornfield of Preacher Joslin's cabin, and at once was in the road, or all the road that ever had been known there. It was no better than the rocky bed of the shallow creek which flowed directly in front of the cabin. Here, in the logging days, iron-shod wheels had worn deep grooves into the sand

rock. The longer erosion of the years also had cut sharp the faces of some of the clay banks. It might have been seen in a stronger light than this of twilight, that these banks had great seams of black running parallel through them—croppings of the heavy coal seams known throughout the region.

From time to time the young man sprang from rock to rock as he made his way down the bed of the little branch now running full from the heavy rain, but he walked on carelessly, for the road was well known to him by day or night. It had been the path of himself, his family, his ancestors, for well nigh a hundred years.

As he advanced, David Joslin cast an eye now and again upon the mountain sides. They were beautiful, even in the dull of evening, clad in gorgeous autumnal glories of chlorophyl afire under the combined alchemies of the rain, the frost, and the sun. There were reds more brilliant than may be seen even among the maples of the far north when the frost comes, yellows for which a new color name must be invented, browns of unspeakable velvety softness, a thousand ocherous and saffron hues such as no palette carries. They lay now softened and dulled, but very beautiful.

Young Joslin knew every hill, every ravine, every mountain cove which lay about him here,—all the country for fifty miles. Presently he reached the end of this little side trail down from the mountains, and

emerged into a wider valley where passed the considerable volume of a fork of the Kentucky River, itself now running yellow from the rains. Had he cared he might have noted, now passing on the flood, scattered logs and parts of rafts, flotsam and jetsam of the old wasteful occupants of the land, who cut and dragged priceless timber to the grudging stream, and lost the more the more they labored.

He turned to the right, followed down the muddy river bank, and within a quarter of a mile turned yet again to the right at a decrepit gate serving in part to stop the way as adjutant of a broken rail fence which marked a scanty field.

Before him now lay a cleared space of some twenty acres or more, occupied at one corner by spare, gnarled apple trees, no man might say how old, appurtenances of acres which David Joslin had "heired" from the husband of the same grandam whom but now he had left. Behind the apple trees rose a low roof, the broken cover of a scant gallery, a chimney, ragged-topped, at each end of the cabin. Here and there stood a China tree, yonder grew a vine, softening somewhat and beautifying even in the beauty of decay those rude surroundings. Back of the house were other small log buildings, cribs scantily filled with corn. In the barnyard stood two tall poles, behind which, running up into the darkness of the mountain side, stretched the long rusted wires which in the harvest-

ing of the autumn sometimes carried down from the side of the mountains, too steep for the use of horse or mule, the sacks of corn perilously gathered above and sent down in the easiest way to the farmyard.

Apparently the harvest that fall had been but scant. The place had an air of poverty, or meagerness—rather perhaps should one use the latter than the former word. It was not the home of a drunkard, or a ne'er-do-well, or a poverty-smitten man, which David Joslin now approached—his own home, one like to many others all about him in these hills. It was an old, old, out-worn land, a decrepit land, which lay all about him. He was like his neighbors, his home like theirs.

David Joslin walked past the China tree and up to his own door. He stood for a moment scraping the mud from his feet at the end of the broken board on the little gallery before he pushed open the door. A woman rose to meet him.

She was a woman yet young, but seemed no longer young. Perhaps she was twenty-two, perhaps twenty-five years of age. She was tall and strong, after the fashion of the mountain woman, angular, spare. The thin dark hair, swept smoothly back from her bony forehead, seemed to come from a scalp tight-grown upon the skull. She appeared to carry about her the look of a certain raw, rugged strength, though there was little of the soft and feminine about her figure,

about her attitude, about her voice as she now spoke to him.

"Why didn't ye come home long ago?" she demanded with no preliminary.

Joslin made no answer, but sat down sullenly in a chair which he pushed up to the fireplace. The flames were dying down into a mass of coals which likewise seemed sullen. He reached out to the scant pile of firewood at the corner of the hearth, and cast on a stick or so.

"Ye're always away," she went on grumbling. "Folks'll think ye don't care nothin' fer yore own fam'ly. Every whip-stitch ye're off up into the hills. visitin' somewhars or other, I don't know whar. What's it comin' to?"

Still he made no answer, and she went on upbraiding.

"We been married four years, an' ye act as free as if we'd nuvver been married at all. Don't yore fam'ly need nothin' now an' agin? Is this all a womern's got to live fer, I want to know? Look what kind of place we got."

"Hit's all ye come from," he said at length. "Hit's all yore people ever knowed, er mine. Why should ary of us expect more?"

An even, dull, accepted despair was in his tone. As for her, she cared not so much for philosophy as for the heckling she had held in reserve for him.

"Hit's a lot to offer ary womern, hain't it?" said she.

"Had ye much to offer in exchange?" said he, quietly and bitterly. "We traded fair, the best we knowed, the same sort of trade that's common. We got married—thar was our children. What more is thar fer ye er em er ary of us in these hills, I'd like to know! Such as I've had, ye've had."

There was something so stern, so bitter, in his sudden unkind remark that she took another tack.

"Hain't ye tired?" she began, wheedling. She stooped over and pulled back the coverlet, a gaudy, patchwork quilt upon the single bed of the apartment. "Don't ye want to lay down an' rest a while?"

"No. I'm a-thinkin'."

"What was ye thinkin' about—me?"

"No, I was thinkin' about the new doctor, an' what he said to me last week."

She was silent now. The name of the new doctor seemed to be something she had heard before.

"Ye talk too much with that new doctor. He puts too many fool ideas in yore haid. We're married, an' we got to live like that. How do ye figger any different, I'd like to know? Ye brung me here yore own self—ye knowed what ye wanted when ye come up thar courtin' me at my daddy's at the haid of Bull Skin. I come right down here to yore house when I was married. I stood right on this floor here,

an' yore daddy, he married us. Ye know that."

"Yes, I do." The young man's face was extremely grave and gray as he spoke.

"—An' yore daddy was a regular ordained preacher."

"What's the matter with ye, anyways?" she went on querulously. "Ye been a-quarlin' with yore own people well as me?"

"My own daddy jest now ordered me outen his house. I'm nuvver goin' thar no more."

"Huh! I reckon yore own free-thinkin' ways druv it on ye."

"He burned my fiddle!" said David Joslin, with sudden resentment.

"Ye mought have expected it—goin' up thar to play a fiddle in a preacher's house!"

"I jest had her strung up for the fust time," rejoined her husband. "I was a-playin' 'Barbara Allen.' My daddy accused me of bein' sinful. We've got it hard enough livin' in these hills without being damned when we die."

"Hush, Dave! Be keerful of what ye say."

"I'm a-bein' keerful. I'm castin' up accounts this very day. I been castin' up accounts fer some time. I'm thinkin' of what that new doctor said to me. *That* was preachin' sich as I nuvver heern tell of afore in these hills. I wish't he'd come here an' stay right along."

She made no answer now, but pulled out the rude board table at the side of the fire, and placed upon it a yellowed plate or so, holding a piece of cold corn-pone, a handful of parched corn.

"Eat," said she. "Hit's all we got. I borrowed some meal from the Taggarts. They've got no more to lend."

"Don't ask nothin' of no one, womern. I'll not be beholden to ary man. I tell ye, I'm castin' up accounts."

"What do ye mean—what ye talkin' about, Dave?" She was half-frightened now.

"I hardly know. I kain't see very much light jest yit."

"Hain't ye goin' to eat?" she said. "Hain't ye goin' to sleep? Hain't ye goin' to lay down on the bed?"

"No!" said he. "No! Our children laid thar onct —them two. They died. It was best they died. They're our last ones."

"What do ye mean, Dave?" she again demanded, wide-eyed. "What do ye mean—ye hain't a-goin' to sleep here with me agin—nuvver?"

"No, I told ye. I said I was a-castin' up accounts. Meliss', I've got to go away."

"Ye hain't a-goin' to quit me?"

"I don't like that word. I nuvver quit nobody nor nothin' that I owed a duty to. But I've got to go

away. Hit hain't right fer ye an' me to live together no more. Children—why, my God!"

"Dave! Air ye crazy? Hain't I been a good and faithful womern to ye? Tell me!"

He did not answer her.

"Tell me, Dave—have ye——"

"No! I've been as faithful as ye. We made our mistake when we was married—we mustn't make it no more an' no wuss."

"The new doctor!" She blazed out now with scorn, contempt, indignation, all in her voice.

"Yes!" he replied suddenly. "The new doctor—ary doctor—ary man with sense could have told us what he told me. I know now a heap of things I nuvver knowed—what my pap an' mammy nuvver knowed."

"Ye're a-goin' to quit me like a coward!"

"I quit nobody like a coward. I hain't a coward, Meliss', an' you know it. I'm a-goin' to quit ye because I'm a brave man. I've got to be as brave as ary man ever was in the Cumberlands to do what I've got to do. Do ye think it's easy fer me? Don't ye think I hear my own children cryin' still—mine as much as yours? An' this was all I have to give them. Thank God they died! They'd nuvver orter of been borned."

His wife sank into a chair, her hands dropped limp in her lap. His own hands were trembling as, after

a long time, he turned toward her; his voice trembled also.

"Look around us in these hills," said he, his lips quivering. "Think of what's in them coves back fer fifty mile yan way, and yan, and yan, up the Bull Skin, up the Redbird, up Hell-fer-Sartin an' Newfound an' the Rattlesnake an' the Buffalo—houses like ours—whisky—killin'—cousins."

"Cousins?" Her voice was hoarse. "Why not?"

"Whisky—killin'—cousins!" he repeated. "I don't know which is the wust, but I reckon the cousin part is. *We was cousins!* Thar's *cousins* back in our family, both sides, as far as we know. Those children—thank God! Thar'll be no more."

Now indeed a long, long silence fell between them. The woman was pale as death as she turned to him at last, to hear his self-accusing monotone.

"God knows what I'm a-goin' to do. But one thing shore, if I've sinned I've got to pay. I reckon it's a-goin' to be a right big price I've got to pay. Thar's a wall around us—hit's around these mountings—hit shets us all out from all the world. Do ye reckon, Meliss', if I was able to make a way through—do ye reckon they'd say I'd paid?"

"Ye talk like a fool, man!" said she with sudden anger, "like a fool! Ye let a limpy, glass-eyed doctor stir ye all up and fill yer haid with fool idees. Ye say ye're a-goin' to quit me, that had our babies—

because of what? Yore duty's to me—to me—me! Ye married me. I want live children—hit's a disgrace when a womern don't have none. Hit's yore business to take care of me, an' now ye say ye're a-goin' to quit me. Ye're a coward, that's what ye air, the wustest coward ever was in these mountings. I don't want furrin ways myself—I don't want to go Outside—I don't want ary of them new doctors comin' in here, fetched on from Outside. This is our country, an' it's good enough. Ye talk about leavin' me. Thar's some other womern somewhars—that's what's the matter with ye, Dave Joslin, an' I know it!"

He rose now, gray, pallid, half-tottering as he stood under her tirade.

"That's not true," said he at last. "I don't reckon ye understand me, er what I mean, er what I think. The only question is, what's right. We hain't livin' the way folks orter do to-day. The new doctor tolt me what's Outside. Why, womern, that's the world—that's life! More'n that—a heap more'n that—that's duty! If I stay here an' make a little corn an' raise a couple of hogs a year, livin' with ye an' raisin' a couple more of childern, I hain't livin' the way I'd orter. If we wasn't cousins—if I didn't know now it's a sin to live on this way—I wouldn't quit ye—I'd die first. I hain't *a-goin'* to quit ye now. As long as I got a dollar in the world it's yores. I'll hep ye

more by goin' out. An' I'm a-goin' out—I'm a-goin' Outside.

"I'm sorry fer ye, Meliss'," said he presently, as she sat stone-cold. "I'm sorry fer all of the wimern like ye in these mountings, sorry fer us all. God knows I don't want to make it harder fer ye—only easier. Hit's just a question o' what's the right thing to do."

There was a vast softness, a great pity in his voice as he spoke now. He stood irresolute, and his eyes, in spite of himself, turned sideways to where once had lain two small bundles at the foot of the unkempt bed.

"Ye coward!" she cast at him, bitter and intense. "Ye low-borned coward! Ye're a-goin' to quit me, mother of yore dead childern. Well, go on along. I won't ax ye to stay. Git along."

"My granny she's a-goin' to take keer o' ye," said David Joslin. "She'll be kind to ye, an' ye'll have no babies to bother over nuvver. Don't—don't talk to me no more. I reckon I kain't stand no more."

He stepped to the mantel, took from it the old faded book that lay there—no more and nothing else of all in the house that had been his. Then he turned toward his own door.

She heard his slow footsteps stumbling through the sodden grass. There closed behind him for the second time that evening a door opening upon what he had once called home.

CHAPTER III

THE BLOOD COVENANT

DAVID JOSLIN turned from his own wastrel fire, his own decrepit gate, as but now he had from his father's, and he did not look back at what he had left. Steadily his feet slushed forward, as he held his course through the dripping rain, faced now up the valley of the stream near which he lived. Here and there, on this side or that of the swollen river, showed infrequent lights at the windows of homes—each a hospitable home where he would be welcome at any time of the day or night. But he did not turn to any one of these, homeless as he was himself.

For a considerable distance he kept to the valley until finally he turned into a narrow, deeply sheltered ravine which as he knew had no occupant. It was a wild, uncultivated spot, the mouth of the gulch known as Semmes' Cove. At its foot trickled a stream of water leading far back into the hills through a district where as yet home-building man had not come. The tall trees still stood here unreaped—the giant white oaks and the tremendous trees known as "old-

time poplar," among which not even the slightest garnering had as yet been done by timber-hunting man.

There were secrets of a certain sort up this gulch, as David Joslin knew. Few men openly went into the mouth of this wild ravine, and there was no definite path up the creek such as marked most of the others thereabout. None the less Joslin in the darkness of the night turned into it as one wholly familiar with the vicinity.

He was a woodsman, a wild man fit to conquer and prevail in any wild land. He went now about the business he purposed as steadily as though he were well accustomed to it. With not even the slight assistance of an occasional star, he found the trunk of a giant poplar tree which had fallen—perhaps he knew it from his many wanderings here. The bark upon the trunk was dry, and with the aid of a broken branch he loosed a long fold, sufficient for a roof when propped up on the trunk of the tree itself. He felt within the rotted trunk and drew out an armful of rotted but dry wood, which made him good floor enough for his bed, keeping him above the dampness. A part of it also offered punk for the tinder which he found within the breast of his own blouse. Here also were the primitive tools of the frontiersman in this land—flint and steel. And with flint and steel David Joslin now managed to build himself a fire even in the dripping rain.

He cast himself down, not to sleep, but to ponder and to brood. The wall of blackness shut him in all about, but before him passed continually the panorama of his dreams.

The night wore through, and at length the gray dawn came. The wind was rising now, high in the tops of the trees, and the air was colder since the rain had ceased. Any but a hardened man who had slept thus would have waked stiffened and shivering. Not so Joslin, who rebuilt his fire and looked about him for something with which to stay a hunger natural after twenty-four hours of abstinence. A few fallen nuts from the trees, a frozen persimmon or so, made all the breakfast he could find. In his cupped hand he drank from the little stream. In a few moments he was at the débouchement of the creek trail leading up to his father's home. He halted here as he heard the sound of hoof-beats coming down the stream bed.

A rider came into view making such speed as he could down the perilous footing. He drew up his horse, startled at seeing a man here, but an instant later smiled.

"That ye, Dave?" said he. "Ye had me skeered at fust."

"What's yore hurry? Whar ye goin'?"

"Hurry enough—I was a-comin' atter ye."

"What's wrong?"

"Plenty's wrong—yore daddy's daid—right up thar."

"What's that?—What do ye mean?" demanded Joslin. "Daid—I left him last night—he was well."

"Huh! He's daid now all right," rejoined the rider, finding a piece of tobacco, from which he bit a chew. "I was a-goin' down atter ye. I seed him a-hangin' thar right by his neck on a tree this side the house. He must of hung hisself, that's all."

"That's a lie," said Joslin. "My daddy kill hisself——"

"Come on an' see then. If he hain't daid by now, my name hain't Chan Bullock! He's done finished what old Absalom started. I rid over to the house to see how he was a-gittin' along, an' I come spang on him when I come down offen the hill. He was still a-kickin' then."

David Joslin approached him, his hands hooked as though to drag him from his horse. But an instant later he curbed his wrath, caught at the stirrup strap of the rider's horse, swung the horse's head up the stream, and urged it into speed, himself running alongside with great strides which asked no odds.

He found full verification of all the messenger had told him. From the forked branch of a tree, extending out beyond the steep side of the bank, swung a grim bundle of loose clothing covering what but now had been a strong man. A quick sob came into the

throat of David Joslin as he sprang to the bank. Even as he did so he heard the sound of footsteps coming. The bent and broken figure of Granny Joslin came into view.

"What's wrong here? Who was that I heerd a-hollerin'?—— My God A'mighty, who's a-hangin' thar?—— My son—my son!"

She also was endeavoring to scramble up the bank.

"Was it ye a-hollerin'? Why didn't ye cut him down, ye fool?" she demanded of Bullock, who still sat on his horse.

"Hit hain't lawful, Granny," said he. "Ye mustn't cut him down."

"I'd cut him down if I was damned fer it," cried the old dame. "Ye coward, how long since ye seen this? When ye hollered? Was he livin' then? Ye mought have saved his life. Git outen my way, boy," she said to her grandson, and an instant later she herself, old as she was, had leaned far out along the branch and with a stroke of the knife she always carried had cut loose the rope. There was a thudding, sliding fall. The body of old Preacher Joslin rolled to the foot of the bank among the sodden leaves.

Bullock dismounted and stood looking down at the limp figure. But David pushed him aside.

"Leave him be," said he, and so he slipped his arms around the body of his father, and, lifting him, strode up along the little stream bed to the home now left

the more desolate and abandoned. The dead man's mother, dry-eyed, hobbled along behind. She showed where the body might be laid.

"He hain't daid yit, I most half believe," said she, laying her hand on his heart. "Lay him down here, boys, on his own bed. Thar kain't no one prove then he didn't die in his own bed. The Gannts didn't git him."

If there was indeed a fluttering gasp or two at the lips after they had placed the body of Preacher Joslin upon his own bed in his own house, it was but the last that marked the passing. When not even this might be suspected, Granny Joslin broke into a sort of exalted chant of her own invention.

"I got a son!" she crooned in her shrill, high voice. "He's strong an' tall. He hain't a-feared. He has the hand to kill. He'll slay 'em all. He'll strow the blood. He'll make the fight fer me an' him an' all of us!"

She chanted the words over and over again, the kindling of her dark eyes a fearsome thing to see. Now and again she turned from the dead man to the motionless figure of his son, who stood at his bedside.

"He'll strow the blood," she sang. "He'll kill 'em all!

"May God curse old Absalom Gannt an' all his kin," she said at last, shaking a skinny hand toward heaven. "I pledge ye to it, Davy. Tell the last one of them

all's gone, we'll not fergit. Oh, Davy, it was fer this that ye was borned!"

They stood thus, a grim enough group, when the sound of hoofs in the creek bed intruded. Bullock stepped to the door and accosted the newcomer.

"Howdy, Cal," said he. "Light down an' come in."

The rider dismounted, casting his bridle rein across the top of a picket.

"Andy home?" asked he.

"Well, he is an' he hain't," said Bullock. "Come on in."

"Well, I thought I'd come in an' see him——"

"Come in. Ye can see all thar is of him," and he led the way.

"Good God A'mighty! God damn *me!*" exclaimed the visitor, as he caught sight of what lay on the bed in the room to which they led him. "Granny, how come this? He's daid!"

"Yes, he's daid," said Granny Joslin calmly. "He hung hisself down below by the spring right now. Ye kin see whar the rope cut in his neck. He was a-breathin' when they put him thar. If that fool boy Chan had had any sense at all he'd of cut him down an' done saved him."

"Well, now, Granny," began the accused one. 'Well, now——"

"Wait!" David Joslin raised his own hand. "Granny, don't say that. Hit's the wish of the Lord.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. I think my father is better off. Sence he wished it, let's call it well an' good. I reckon it all got too much fer him."

"Well, I was just a-comin' down," said the newcomer, Calvin Trasker, "to ask ye all out fer a little frolic to-night over to Semmes' Cove. They're a-goin' to draw out this evening, an' a lot of the neighbors'll be thar, like enough."

"Old Absalom?" asked the tall young man, unemotionally.

"Yes," he nodded, "him an' his boys."

"Not all of 'em," said the old dame suddenly. "My boy fixed a couple of them people yesterday afore they got him. Lookahere, whar old Absalom cut him"—her long, bony finger pointed out the spot. "Spite of 'em he wouldn't of died. He killed *hisself,* an' he died in his own bed. Thar kain't no Gannt on airth say they killed my boy."

David Joslin quietly walked over to the foot of the bedstead and unbuckled the belt of the heavy, worn revolver which he found hanging there—the revolver without which his father rarely had traveled in his circuit riding. This he fastened about his own waist, accepting the burden of his father's feud. He made no comment.

"Well, now, how come that diffikilty, Granny? Whar were it?" asked Trasker. "War he hurt bad?"

"He got worse along towards mornin'," said the

dead man's mother. "I seen myself that he war cut deep in his innards, an' couldn't live long noways. He lay all night a-beggin' me to see that case he died the rest of us would kerry on the quarl fer him. Now ye say Absalom an' some of his folks is a-goin' to be over thar to-night?"

The visitor nodded.

"That's a mighty good thing," said Granny Joslin, nodding her own approval. "Go on over, Davy. See what ye kin do. Will ye promise me ye'll go?"

"I promise ye, yes, Granny," replied David Joslin slowly. "But I'll tell ye now, it hain't to my likin'. I'm only goin' fer one reason."

Seeing that they all three stood looking at him in silence, he went on.

"I don't believe in these fights and feuds no more. I don't believe in it even now that it's come closeter than ever to me. I don't believe I'd orter go over thar an' kill nobody else jest because they killed my daddy. Hit hain't right."

They looked at him in cold silence. He raised his hand. "But because I know ye'd all call me a coward if I didn't go, I'm a-goin' over thar with you-all. I'm a-goin' over thar before my own daddy is real daid and buried. I'll face Absalom Gannt an' ary of his kin. I reckon you-all will ride with me. Ye needn't have no doubt that I'll flicker—I won't—none of us nuvver did. But I'm a-tellin' ye now I don't believe

in it, an' I don't want to go. I pray on my knees I'll not have to kill no man, no matter what happens."

He felt the strong clutch of a skinny hand at his arm. His grandmother whirled him about and looked into his eyes with her own blazing orbs.

"My God, I more'n half believe ye're a-skeered, Dave Joslin. God!—have I fetched into the world ary one of my name that's afeerd to kill a rattlesnake like ary one of them Gannts? I wish to God I was a man my own self—I'd show ye. I thought ye was a man, Dave. Hain't ye—tell me—hain't ye, David Joslin?"

"No," said Joslin, "I don't think . . . a coward! But I believe the law orter have charge of all these things. If I kill ary man over thar to-night, I'm a-goin' to give myself up to the law."

"Listen at the fool talk!" broke out his fierce grandma. "Listen at him. Law?—law?—what's the law got to do with a thing like this? I reckon we-all know well enough what the law is."

"I hope to live to see the real law come into these mountings yit," said David Joslin solemnly. "Only question is, what's the law? I hope I'll live to see a different way of figgerin' in these hills."

"Then ye'll wait till hell freezes," said Granny Joslin, savagely. "Hit'll take more'n ye to reform the people in these mountings from real men inter yaller cowards."

"Come in an' eat, men," she added, and led the way to the side of the table, where presently she brought a few half-empty dishes—the same table which soon would hold the body of the dead man. "What we got ye're welcome to. I reckon somehow I kin run this farm alone an' make a livin' here, an' while I run it I'll feed the friends of my fam'ly an' I'll shoot the enemies of my fam'ly that comes, free as if I'd been a man. God knows I'd orter been, with the trouble I've had to carry. Set up an' eat."

"Chan," said she, after a time, her mouth full of dry cornpone, "ride up the creek an' git some of our kin to jine ye over thar in Semmes' Cove this evenin'. They mought be too many fer ye."

Chan Bullock nodded.

"I'll go on with Dave up through the cut-off to the head of the Buffalo, an' jine Chan an' the others up in thar," said Calvin Trasker. "Ye needn't be a-skeered, Granny. Thar's like enough to be some hell a-poppin' in thar afore we hold the funer'l here. Them Gannts may have a funer'l too."

"Come around tomorrow, them of ye that's left alive," said the old woman calmly. "We'll bury him out in the orchud, whar most of his folks is. Come on now—lend me a hand an' we'll lift him up on the table. I don't reckon he'll bleed no more now."

CHAPTER IV

THE FROLIC AT SEMMES' COVE

IT was late afternoon when David Joslin and Calvin Trasker, his kinsman, started into the hills. They rode in silence as they followed the winding little path which led up into the wilderness of the upper ridges. Each was armed with a heavy revolver which swung under his coat, and each carried in his side pockets abundance of additional ammunition for his weapon. Neither spoke. Neither showed any agitation.

They pulled up at the imprint of horses' hoofs on the trail coming up from one of the little side ravines.

Trasker spoke. "Absalom, he don't live so far off from here."

"I wish't he'd stay at home," said David Joslin moodily.

"Look-a-here, Dave," began the other testily. "What's the matter with ye? Is thar arything in this here talk I heerd about ye feelin' maybe ye was called to be a preacher, same as yore daddy?"

Joslin replied calmly. "I don't know. I'm askin'

fer a leadin'. I kain't see that this here business is quite right no more."

"Ye don't belong in here then," said Trasker, and half drew rein.

"I do belong in here, an' nowhars else!" said David Joslin. "If I ever was called—if I ever come to preach in these here hills, you-all'll feel I wasn't no coward. I'm a-goin' to prove it to you-all that I hain't."

"Go ahead," said Trasker succinctly, and again Joslin led the way up the mountain slope.

They paused presently at the rendezvous where their kinsmen presently would join them, granted Bullock had been successful in passing the feudal torch. Trasker talked yet further.

"He was a great old sport, yore daddy," said he. "I reckon he was shot in half a dozen places in his time. Seemed like they couldn't kill him, nohow. An' him an' old Absalom had it fist an' skull together more'n once in their day."

Joslin nodded. "That was afore he took up preachin'. Heathen—why, we all been worse'n ary heathen in the world. An' here's ye an' me worse'n ary heathen right now, ridin' out to squar what only the hand of God kin squar."

"Well," rejoined Trasker, meditatively chewing his quid, "maybe with four or five of us together we kin help the hand of God jest a leetle bit. That's the leadin' I git, anyways, for this evenin'."

"Well, here's our fellers comin'," he went on, turning in his saddle. "Even a few is better'n none."

They were joined now by three other riders, Chan Bullock and two younger men, one scarce more than a boy, the beard not yet sprouted on his face. They did not make even a salutation as they drew up alongside the two horsemen who had tarried at the rendezvous.

They turned up the hillside, once more resuming the winding path along the crooked divide which separated the two forks of the main stream which bored deep into the Cumberlands thereabouts. They all knew well enough the entry point for the head of Semmes' Cove, and here in due time they halted to hold counsel.

"Sever'l been here," said David Joslin, pointing out the horse tracks which led down into the thickets of the unbroken gulch before them. Without any comment they all dismounted and advanced, leading their horses, Joslin ahead. They walked in this way for perhaps a quarter of an hour. Then Joslin, without a word, turned and tied his own horse to a tree, the others following his example.

There had been an illicit stillhouse in this wild ravine how long none might tell—in fact, many stillhouses had been there sporadically and spasmodically conducted as the fancy of this man or that might determine, for the region was wild and remote, and never visited by any of the outside world. These visitors all

knew well enough where the present stillhouse was hidden—in a thicket of laurel just at the edge of a rock escarpment which jutted out upon the farther side. They followed on now steadily, alertly, until at length Joslin raised a hand.

Silently they pushed their way into the edge of the thicket. Sounds of laughter, of song, greeted them. A faint, sickish odor rose above the tops of the low laurel. The visitors, five in all in number—Joslin, Calvin Trasker, Chan Bullock, and two other "cousins," Nick Cummings and Cole Sennem—all pulled up at a point whence they could view the scene, whose main features they knew well enough without inspection.

There were a dozen men here and there, taking turns at the little copper cups which stood upon the hewn face of a log. A couple of barrels, a copper pipe between, made pretty much all the visible external aspect of the still. The great bulb was hidden in one barrel, the curled copper tube cooled in another. Here and there lay empty sacks once carrying corn. A cup-peg or so driven into a tree trunk showed the openness and confidence with which matters hereabout had been conducted, and the spot showed every sign of frequent use.

One of the men, taking up one of the copper vessels from the low log table, stooped at the pipe at the foot of one of the barrels, watching the trickle of

white liquid which came forth. He drank it clear and strong as alcohol, undiluted. Like fire it went through all his veins.

"Whoopee!" he exclaimed, throwing up a hand. "I'm the ole blue hen's chicken! I kin outwrastle er outjump er outshoot ary man here er anywhar's else."

"Ye wouldn't say that if old Absalom war here," laughed a nearby occupant of a rude bench.

"No, nor if Old Man Joslin war, neither."

"I would too! I hain't a-skeered o' nobody," replied the warlike youth. "I'll show ary of 'em."

"What'll ye show us?" demanded David Joslin. Silent as an Indian he had left the fringe of cover, and stood now in the open, his eyes steady, his arms folded, looking at the men before him. And now at his side and back of him ranged his little body of clansmen.

Sudden silence fell upon all those thus surprised. They looked at him in amazement.

"Whar's old Absalom?" he demanded of a man whom he knew, who stood, the half-finished cup of liquor still in his hand.

"Air ye lookin' to start ary diffikilty?" replied his neighbor, also with a question.

"That's fer us to say," said David Joslin. "My daddy's daid. He got hurt yesterday by old Absalom an' his people. I come over here to-day to see old Absalom an' ary kin he happens to have along with him. Whar is he?"

Silence for a long time held the group. It behooved all to be cautious.

"He's been in here somewhar," went on Joslin, "an' he hain't fur now. Tell me, is he down at the dance house?"

"Well, ye mought go an' see," rejoined the first speaker, grinning. "Ye know, Dave Joslin, I hain't got no quarl with ye, nor has ary o' my people. Ye set right here now, boys," he continued, sweeping out a long arm toward the merrymakers, who still lingered about the liquor barrel.

"Thar's more of them than thar is of ye," he whispered hurriedly to Joslin as he stepped up. "The house is full, an' they're dancin'. Three or four gals from down on the Buffalo is in thar now. They're havin' a right big frolic."

Without a word Joslin turned and hurried down the path. He knew the location of the building to which reference had been made—a long log structure rudely floored with puncheons, sometimes employed locally as a sort of adjunct of the still. The sounds of dancing, the music of one or two reedy violins, the voice of a caller now and then, greeted the party of avengers who now approached this curious building hidden in the heart of the mountain wilderness. Whether or not all of the occupants of the dance house were of Absalom Gannt's party, neither David Joslin nor any one else might tell. There might be a general

mingling here of friend and foe until some overt act should light again the ancient fire, forever smouldering.

Joslin beckoned to his companions. "Git behind them rocks right over thar, boys," he whispered. "I'm a-goin' up to the door."

The young men with him went about their business with perfect calmness, although the eye of each was alert and glittering. They took their stations under the leadership of the man who they now regarded as the chieftain of their clan, and watched him go to what seemed certain death.

Joslin advanced steadily to the door, his thumbs in the waist band of his trousers. With his left hand he knocked loudly on the jamb of the door. He spoke to some one, apparently an acquaintance, who noticed him.

"Is Absalom Gannt here?" he demanded. "If he is, tell him to come out. I'll wait till he comes out fair."

"Good God A'mighty, Davy," said the other who stood within. "Air ye atter trouble? This is jest a little frolic."

"Tell him to come out," repeated Joslin. "I want Absalom Gannt!" The courage of this deed went into the sagas of the Cumberlands—the act of a man who scorned certain death.

It must have been some friend of Absalom Gannt, some relative perhaps, who heard this summons and

saw the gray face of David Joslin staring into the half-darkened interior. With a shout he himself sprang to the door, gun in hand. Joslin leaped aside. As he did so he heard the roar of a heavy revolver back of him. Chan Bullock, the long blue barrel of his six-shooter resting on his arm at the top of the protecting boulder, fired at the man who appeared in the door. The latter fell forward and slouched over on his face, his head on his arms.

A half instant of silence, then came the roar of a pistol at the window near where Joslin stood. The men at the boulders, in turn, began firing generously at every crack and cranny of the house, regardless of who or what might be within. The marksman at the window was deliberate. With care he rested the barrel of his weapon against the window sash. At its third report, Joslin heard back of him a heavy groan, but he did not see Calvin Trasker roll over on his back, his doubled arm across his face.

The sound of gunfire now was general on every side. None might say who was harmed, who as yet was safe. As for Joslin, he had work to do. Absalom Gannt was still inside the house.

He stepped forward again deliberately to the door, pushed aside the man who stood there peering out, and broke his way into the crowd. Two or three women, cowering, shrank into the farther corner of the room. Men stood here and there, each with weapon

in hand. The acrid taste of gunpowder, which hung in the blue pall of smoke, was in the nostrils of all.

"Absalom Gannt!" rose the high, clear voice of David Joslin, "I've come fer ye. Come out here an' meet me fair if ye hain't a coward. Absalom Gannt! Absalom Gannt——"

That was the last word the friends of David Joslin heard him speak, and, as they told the story, it was apparent that the Joslin blood "never flickered onct."

What happened to David Joslin they did not know —he himself did not. He was perhaps conscious of a heavy blow at the base of his head, then came unconsciousness, oblivion. He fell upon the floor of the rude revel house.

Firing ceased now. The occupants of the cabin rushed out. The defenders of the line of boulders, three only in number now, broke and sprang up the mountain side, pursued by a rain of bullets which touched none of them.

The frolic at Semmes' Cove had found its ending—not an unusual ending for such scenes.

CHAPTER V

THE AWAKENING OF DAVID JOSLIN

IN the old apple orchard of Preacher Joslin—whose gnarled trees had been planted by some unknown hand unknown years ago—a long and narrow rift showed in the rocky soil. The owner of these meager acres was now come to his rest, here by the side of many others of his kin whose graves, unmarked, lay here or there, no longer identified under the broken branches of the trees.

A neighbor blacksmith had wrought sufficient nails to hold together a rough box. In this he and Granny Joslin had placed the dead man. Word passed up and down the little creek that the burying of Andrew Joslin would be at noon that day; so one by one horses came splashing down the creek—usually carrying a man with a woman back of him, the woman sometimes carrying one child, sometimes two.

These brought fresh word. Calvin Trasker, killed in the frolic at Semmes' Cove, had already been buried. He was accounted well avenged. It was almost sure he had killed his man before he had received his own death wound. As for Chan Bullock and his two

young cousins, they were no less than heroes. Four of the Gannt family had been left accounted for, whether by aim of the fallen or that of the three escaping feudists none might say. The Joslins had none the worst of it. Had not one of them—which, no one could tell—fired the shot which broke old Absalom's arm? This funeral party, practically a rallying of the Joslin clan, was no time more of special mourning than of exultation. The talk was not so much of the dead man, not so much of the dead man's son David, who was still missing, as it was of the victory attained over the rival clan.

And so they buried Preacher Joslin, and thereafter, all having been duly concluded, and a simple, unmarked stone having been set up at the head of his grave, old Granny Joslin, robbed of her son and her son's son, asked them once more to eat of what she had, and so presently bade them good-by.

"I'll git along somehow, folks," said she. "Don't you-all worry none about me. If Davy's daid, why, he's daid, an' that's all about it. Atter a few days, you-all go over in thar an' watch for buzzards an' crows—if they hain't buried him deep, we'll find out whar he's at."

But after the funeral party had departed, plashing their way back up the creek-bed road, Granny Joslin sat down to make her own accounting. David—her boy Davy—the one who understood her—whom she

understood so well—where was he? Had they indeed killed him? Was he lying out there in the mountains somewhere, his last resting place unknown to any save his enemies?

"Curse the last of them—them cowardly Gannts!" Again she raised her skinny hand in malediction. "May mildew fall on them an' theirs. May their blood fail to breed, an' may they know sorrer an' trouble all their lives! I wish to God I was a man. Oh, God, bring me back my man—my boy Davy!"

But the mountain side against which she looked, against which she spoke, made no answer to her. She sat alone. A film came over her fierce eye like that which crosses the eye of a dying hawk. Whether or not a tear eventually might have fallen may not be said, but before that time old Granny Joslin rose, grunting, and hobbled back into her own desolate home. She lighted the fire. She set all things in order. The castle of the Joslins had not yet been taken. But David came not back that day, nor upon the third, nor yet upon the fourth day. By that time she had given him up for dead.

Yet it was upon the morning of that fourth day that David Joslin himself sat concealed, high upon the mountain side, and looked down upon the broken home of Granny Joslin. He saw the smoke curling up from the chimney, and knew it as the banner of defiance.

He knew that the old dame would live out her life to its end according to her creed.

His keen eye saw the new mound in the apple orchard—the broken clay now dried in the sun of several days. He could guess the rest. For himself, he was alive. He had been dead, but now he was born again.

At the end of the fight in Semmes' Cove, there was a general scattering and confusion. The Gannt party finally had taken care of their own dead and wounded, and, passing on up the ravine toward the usual paths of escape, had tarried at the stillhouse only long enough to refresh themselves as was their need. For those of the attacking party left behind they had small care. A man or two was down somewhere behind the rocks. As for the man who had broken into the house —David Joslin—he was dead. Had they not caught him neck and crop, and thrown him headlong into the gully? Yes, one thing was sure, David Joslin was dead; and he had been the leader of the attack. Therefore, the Gannts accounted themselves as having won a coup also for their side of the feud.

When Joslin awoke to the consciousness of bitter pain, he reached out a hand in the darkness which enshrouded him. He felt damp earth. So, then, he reasoned, he was dead and buried, and this was his grave! For some time he made no attempt to breathe or to move. Yes, this was his grave. He lay he knew not

how long in the full realization that life was done for him.

Then, as the cool of the night refreshed him, he felt about him, felt the weeping of dew-damp leaves above him, and slowly reasoned that he was not dead at all, and not in his grave, but that he had been flung somewhere here into the bottom of the ravine.

Slowly he struggled to his knees. He staggered up the side of the slope as best he might, more by chance than otherwise, taking that side which lay nearest the dance house. He saw in the gloom the low boulders, behind which his fighting men had lain. He stumbled across the dead body of Calvin Trasker, left where he had fallen. There remained to him sensibility enough to put the dead man's hat across his face; but he could do no more than that. He knew that if he were found here he would be killed indeed. So, knowing that there was no longer need for him or chance for him here, he staggered on down the ravine of Semmes' Cove, until at length he could go no farther, and so fell once more unconscious.

When again he awoke it was broad sunshine. How long he had lain he could not tell. But now thirst assailed him, thirst which he might quench in the trickle of water which lay below. The provender of the woods, a few nuts, a pawpaw or so, seemed grateful to him now. He staggered on, knowing that it would be no more than two or three miles down the ravine

until he came to the little camp he had made in the rain, after he had left his own home on that unhappy day. And so at length he found that bivouac and dropped into the bed of rotten wood once more, and lay prostrate all that day and the next.

It was really upon the morning of the fourth day after the encounter—although Joslin himself could not have said as to that—that, strong enough now to walk, he staggered out of the thicket-covered lower entrance of Semmes' Cove into the little creek bed, which made the path to his father's home. He must look once more at the house where he himself was born.

Was born, did he say? No, he had been born a second time! In these long hours of misery and pain, David Joslin had taken accounting as best he might with life and the philosophies thereof. In his fashion of thought, he had gained the conviction that his "call" had come to him. He was called for a different life. There was no doubt about it. New duties lay before him—all of a new life—because he had been born again! To him his salvation was not less than a miracle, and he accepted it as such solemnly and reverently, feeling himself now consecrated fully for some cause. What the form of that consecration might be he himself did not clearly know as yet.

But there came to him, with this feeling, the solemn conviction that he must leave this country. This opportunity seemed to him providential. No, he would

not even go to say farewell to his wife, nor to greet his grandma, Granny Joslin, to give counsel to her. He, being dead, must depart secretly forever from these hills until he might return to them to do the thing given him to do.

Such, unnatural and hard as that might seem to others, was the ancient, grim, uncompromising creed of David Joslin of the Cumberlands. Let the dead bury its dead. Let the living live their own lives.

Weakly, slowly, he climbed along the mountain side above the creek bed, to avoid any passerby, and so at length reached the point upon the opposing hill whence he might look down upon the little home once owned by the man who lay there now, under the drying yellow ridge in the apple orchard planted by his sires.

How long David Joslin sat here, his chin in his hands, he himself might not have told. He sat looking down, pondering, resolving. . . . Yes, he was born again! What must he do?

At length he rose, staggeringly rose, seeking about for some broken branch to aid him further in his journey. For now he purposed a long, long journey out from these hills. He was going away from his own people!

His hand fell against something hard in the side pocket of his ragged coat. It was the old book he had borrowed of his father—the well-thumbed volume of Calvin's Institutes. His belt and revolver were gone

—he knew not where—but here was this ancient, iron book. He recalled now, with the tenacious memory of the mountaineer, a passage which he had read therein:

Truly, I have no refuge but in Him. Let no man flatter himself, for of himself he is only a devil. For what have you of your own but sin? Take for yourself sin, which is your own. Your righteousness belongs to God. Nature is wounded, distressed and ruined. It needs a true confession, not a false defense.

"A true confession—not a false defense!" All the honesty, all the ignorance, all the hope of these mountains were in the mind of David Joslin, as he repeated these vague words of the old mystic to himself. He now felt himself a prophet.

And now, a prophet, he was going out into the world.

CHAPTER VI

THE WANDERING WOMEN

WHEN Joslin finally rose and set his face away from the sight of the hearth fire he had known, with staff and scrip to start out into the world, he followed along the winding height of land below the summit leading towards Hell-fer-Sartin—the objective of his father's last circuit riding. Here he crossed the Bull Skin Valley, fording the shallow stream, and made directly into the harder going of the divide between that stream and the Redbird. Feeding himself as best he might, he lay out yet another night in the hills; but by this time the seasoned vigor of his own frame began to reassert itself. He grew stronger in spite of the pain of his wound, in spite of his long abstention from wholesome food. He evaded all sounds of life at the little farms scattered here and there among the mountains. A rail fence caused him to turn aside; the sight of a smoke drove him deeper back into the hills.

It was perhaps ten o'clock of the second morning, when he found himself on the river trail of a fork of the Kentucky River, that he paused at the sound

of a human voice. It seemed not to be approaching, but stationary—a woman's voice, now raised in some sort of old ballad tune. It seemed to him he might go forward.

She sat on a pallet of leaves at the side of the road, a little above its level, in a sort of natural cave or opening in the cliff face. A shelf of limestone extended out perhaps twenty feet, and left under it a sort of open-faced cavern. The roof was black with many smokes—it always had been black with smoke since the memory of white men in that region; for here, tradition told, had dwelt the last two Indians of the Cumberlands, when the whites rallied and slew them both. This white woman had taken up the ancient lair of men scarce more wild than she herself seemed now.

She was an old-seeming woman, albeit perhaps once comely. Her dark hair, not fully grayed, fell about a face once small-featured, large-eyed. What charm she once had had was past or passing; yet something of her philosophy of life remained, enabling her to sing at this hour in the morning.

"Howdy, stranger," she said, looking at him with a direct and easy familiarity singular enough in the circumstances, for the mountain women are shy and silent with men. "Whar ye bound?"

"Howdy," said David Joslin. "I'm a-goin' down the creek a ways."

"If ye air, I wish ye'd see if my darter is along in the field below. Tell her to come on back home. She's got her little girl along with her—ye'll know 'em if ye see 'em."

"Home?" said David Joslin rather vaguely, looking at the blackened roof of the cavern. The woman laughed.

"All the home we got, my darter an' me. We've lived here off an' on many a year. They call me Annie. They call her Min. Hit's no difference about the rest of the name."

"I know ye hain't born in these parts or ye'd know about us two," she continued. "This has been my home—all I've ever had in my life—I kain't say how many years. I move up an' down. Sometimes I'm up on Big Creek—sometimes on the Kaintucky. I follow the rafts. I've even been Outside. Min, she nuvver has. Some of my other girls has, maybe."

"Yore other girls?" began Joslin.

"I've had seven children—four girls," said she quietly, unemotionally.

"I don't know yore fam'ly," said David Joslin, hesitating still.

"I hain't got no fam'ly, I told ye, an' I don't come o' no fam'ly. Us two lives here together—we're the wanderin' wimmern—that's what they call us in this country. Don't ye know about us?

"Well, now"—and she turned her once bold eyes upon him with renewed defiance, as he did not reply—"I told ye I'd had seven children. Ye want to know who's the father of Min? I kain't tell ye rightly. She couldn't tell ye rightly who's the father of her girl she's got along with her now. I've had seven children. Who's their fathers?—I don't know. What's more, I don't keer. What's the difference? Who air we, back in the hills? What chancet have we got?"

Joslin stood leaning on his staff, pale, hollow-eyed, gaunt. In his eyes was a vast pity, a terrible understanding.

"Kin I wait here for a minute or so?" said he. "I'm right tired."

"Ye've been hurt," said she, pointing to his bandaged head, for which he had made such care as he might. "Well, I don't ask ye no questions. I've seen plenty of men hurt, in the raftin' times."

"We're stoppin' here now," she went on explaining. "Because, mought come a tide any time, an' then the rafts'll come. They tie up yander at the big tree thar —the men come acrosst. Well, here's home for Min an' me. She's young. I'm gittin' pretty old. Few cares fer such as me."

Then she went on. "That's our life, stranger. Ye kin guess the rest. We're the wanderin' wimmern. There's no hope fer us. We never had no chancet."

"Kin ye read?" asked David Joslin quietly. "Kin ye write? Kin yore darter?"

She shook her head.

"I kin read jest a little bit," said he himself slowly. "I kin write jest a little bit. Ye say ye've had no chancet. That's true. What chancet have ary of us here? Whar can we learn anything? I'm a-goin' Outside. I'm a-goin' on a journey."

"Set down an' eat," said she, with the unfailing hospitality of the mountains. "We hain't got much. I kin parch ye some corn, maybe. Min's down below trying to find some hickernuts an' some corn. Folks don't mind our foragin' around. Why, even sometimes I've slept in a cabin now an' then. They don't mind if we sleep in the corn cribs sometimes when the weather's cold. The husks is right warm—warmer'n leaves, I kin tell ye that."

Joslin looked about him. A ragged gunny sack or so, a quilt or two, were heaped into one corner over a pile of leaves—there was no other sign of couch. In another corner of the cavern a blackened spot showed where they built their fire. With flint and steel the old woman now began her fire anew. There was a broken bit of iron, once a skillet. In this she managed to parch some grains of corn for the traveler.

"Eat, stranger," said she. "Hit's from Annie, the wanderin' womern, that never had a chancet."

He ate, and drank from a broken gourd of water

which she gave to him. For a time he sat looking across the pageant of the hills, still radiant in their autumn finery.

At length he placed a hand in his pocket. "Take this," said he. "I've got just thirty-five cents. I'll keep the dime, fer I mought need it. I know the people in the mountings don't take pay fer what they give to eat, but won't ye please take this?"

"What do ye mean, man?" said she looking at him curiously, but refusing the money which he offered. "Ye seem like a quare feller to me. Air ye outen yore haid?"

"Maybe I got some good sense knocked into my haid, I don't know. All I know is I'm a-goin' Outside."

"Outside?" The voice of the old woman was low. "I've got some girls—Outside, somewhar. Ye mustn't say they wasn't my children, for they was. They nuvver only had no chancet."

"I know that," said David Joslin. "That's why I'm a-goin' out. I'm a-goin' to try some time, somehow, to make a school, er a church, er something, in these hills. We've got to learn how to read an' write. I've got a callin' that that's what we'd orter do. I never seen ye before—maybe I never will again—but listen now. Some time, if I ever build a school, I'm a-goin' to build another one right in here." His eyes were streaming tears.

"I'll tell ye the place," said she eagerly. "Down below, about hafe a mile, thar's a place whar two stones come together—great big ones. Thar's a level floor under that, wider'n the floor of this here place, an' it's covered in from the rain. Thar's leaves thar—ye could fetch in pine needles a-plenty if ye wanted to, fer thar's pine about. Rain or shine ye could hold school down thar. Hit would be sich a purty place."

"Good luck, stranger," said she. "Ye may be crazy—I reckon ye air—but God knows thar orter be more crazy people like that in these hills."

Her guest turned and followed on down the winding stream in the muddy pathway. A quarter or a half-mile below, he paused and looked across the vine-covered remnant of what once had been a rail fence. He had heard a rustling in the corn, and saw now the figure of a young woman who stood looking at him; at her side, clinging to her tattered skirt, a young child, perhaps four or five years old. This child had in her little apron a store of nuts, gathered in the wood beyond. Her mother carried half an armful of ears of corn.

"Howdy," called David Joslin across the fence, in customary salutation of the hills.

"Howdy," she replied, but still stood motionless.

"Won't ye come up a little closeter?" he resumed. "Yore mammy up yander——"

The young woman slowly advanced, the child cling-

ing still to her skirt. She was a wild-looking creature, but quite comely, with a sort of Indian cast to her features, her skin dark, whether with sun or with other blood none might tell. Her eyes were black as night, and her figure lean and slender, not quite so angular as that of the average mountain woman. Young enough she was, and goodly enough she might have been if ever she "had had her chance."

The child at her skirt, an elfin youngster, had much of her mother's darkness of hair and eyes, her mother's wide mouth of white, even teeth, a thing unusual thereabouts. She now stood staring straight at the stranger, motionless and silent.

"Ye're Min, I reckon," began David Joslin. "Yore mammy—she told me to find ye an' tell ye to go on home now, that it's nearly time fer breakfast."

"Who air ye, stranger?" asked the young woman. "Which way ye bound?"

"My name is David Joslin," he replied. "I live, or useter live, over on the Bull Skin, near the mouth of Coal Creek."

"What's yore business? Air ye lookin' fer logs?"

"No, I hain't. I'm a-goin' Outside."

She stood staring at him, uncertain, silent, awkward. David Joslin returned her gaze with his own frank, gray eyes. "Ye've lived jest the way ye could," said he. "Ye needn't tell me nothin'. I know about the raftsmen. I've been a raftsman myself. I've been

Outside many times. I run down the other fork, don't ye see? I'm yore own sort of people. I hain't no better'n ye, God knows.

"I've got to be goin' now," he added. "I hope to see ye agin some time in here. I'm jest a-goin' Outside fer a little while, ontel I can learn to read an' write."

"I reckon ye don't know all about us—my mammy and me," she began, a slow flush now upon her face. This was a different sort of man—a preacher, perhaps?

"Oh, yes, I do. I know all I need to know or want to know. I know ye nuvver had no chancet."

"I'll say good-by now," he added, extending a hand, which wandered to the tangled crown of the little girl.

And so he turned and left her standing there, the child at her side, the wild forage of the mountains to be their sustenance no one might say yet how long. When the raftsmen came——

CHAPTER VII

THE FABRIC OF A VISION

THE mountaineer's keen eye noted a change in the river along which his pathway led. There had been rain back in the hills, and now what the mountaineers call a "tide" was coming down, discoloring the stream. Passing more than one abandoned raft, its logs submerged in the sand, at length he stopped, having spied a pair of great logs of the yellow poplar, such as the raftsmen use as floaters for the hardwood logs they make up into their rafts. Himself an experienced river man, he saw now the means of hastening his progress.

With aid of a hardwood lever, he managed to get both his logs afloat in the deep pool at whose edge they lay. Waist deep he waded, binding his logs together with a length of grapevine, which he tore from a near-by tree. He found here and there some bits of boards, flotsam and jetsam of the stream, and on these, spread crosswise, he laid bits of brush, making a little mound midships of his craft. When presently he had found a twelve-foot pole for guiding oar, he had done his work in building himself a boat. He stepped aboard

it with the confidence of the river man. He knew the stream would carry him three, four or five miles an hour, sometimes six miles, in its more rapid reaches. He advanced, bend after bend, through a beautiful panorama of flame-decked river banks now gilded by the failing sun. He heard sometimes the bells of wandering cattle, now and again the lowing of a cow, the neighing of a horse; and saw by the river banks many a home of a mountaineer who had settled here none might say when. But the eyes of David Joslin were not for these things.

It was sunset when the hurrying flood of the river brought him to the mouth of that other tributary in whose valley he himself had dwelt all these years. Here was the confluence of the two main forks of the Kentucky. He knew every house of the little village at the forks, every feature of the hills, which rose about the village on either side.

He swung straight past, on the bosom of the rising and augmented river, his craft swimming steadily enough under his accustomed guidance. He scarce saw the little houses, their smoke rising for the evening meal. It was something more which came to his gaze as he traveled here.

He saw, or thought he saw—it might have been but the ragged heads of thunder clouds beyond the rim of the hills—the roofs and stacks of buildings—not one, but many buildings. They sat there on the hill

that rose above the town—yes, he was sure of it. There were many of them—there was a city of them! Yonder on the hill there stood again visualized the thing which he had dreamed! It was but a vision, caught for an instant as the yellow flood of the river swept him on, but it was enough for David Joslin. A strange confidence came to him. He felt all the zeal of the old covenanters, the assurance that God was with him, and that his "calling" now was clear.

But the Kentucky River, coming into full tide, mocked at a man who thought of anything else but things at hand. Joslin knew what was on ahead a few miles—the great Narrows of the Kentucky, fatal to many a raft and many a raftsman. Here, at the foot of a long reach of still water, lay a great rock dam, where the hillsides came close together. The river, narrowed and compressed, was flung furiously out over the rock ledge, to drop a certain distance, and then to curl up and back in a high white wave extending entirely across the stream—what the raftsmen always called the "king breaker" of the Narrows.

There was a sort of pathway along the sides of the Narrows, by which one could come below the big swell, but Joslin, whether moody and distrait, whether in indifference, or whether resolved to take his chances and test his fate, made no attempt to land his frail craft. He headed straight for the great stretch of

slack water, which lay above the rolling crest of the Narrows.

Always he had been chosen steersman for his raft in the river work he knew, and he knew this spot well enough—the fatalities which attended it—but he did not hesitate, and with his long sweep straightened his raft for what he knew would be the great plunge. He took it fair, crouching forward, his knees bent, his eyes ahead, just as he had steered more than one raft through in earlier times, and caught the full blow of the great wave, as he plunged from the darkness into the white of the stream, now under the blanket of the twilight in the deep defile.

He was flung entirely free of his two logs, as they were rent asunder by the force of the swell. He went down into the white—how deep he could not tell—perhaps half-way down to the bottom of the great pool which lay below the Narrows. He emerged, dazed, but his arm found no supporting logs—the two had been flung far apart, and by this time were rolling down the middle course of the white water. With what strength remained to him, he struck out for the right-hand shore, and had strength enough to fling up a hand and ease himself of the current along the rock ledge.

For a time he swung, breathing hard, then drew himself up and out, and lay flat upon the rocks. It was almost night, and it was cold. He was chilled

and weak. He had traveled long and far without rest, and without sufficient food. But the rugged rearing he had had stood him once more in stead. He managed once more, by means of his priceless flint and steel, to build him a little fire, though how he lived through the night he scarce could say.

He knew that it was thirty miles down to the first settlement below, and that there were few houses between. He must walk. Half barefooted, penniless, hungered, wearied and weak, he staggered on as though a man in a trance. At least he was able to make his painful way all those weary miles. It was again evening, and late, when at length he saw the red lights of the little mill town of Windsor, where more than once before then he had pulled up with others of the wild raftsmen, among whom he had spent his youth.

He was at the edge of the great Outside. This was Ultima Thule for the hardwood rafts. And all of Thule, all of the great, unknown, mysterious world lay on beyond. It was a wild figure that this gaunt and haggard young man presented as, hesitant, he stood gazing out at the habitations in which, near at hand to which, beyond which, must lie the answers to the questions of his soul. He saw not the town where the rafts landed. In his mind still lived the vision of yon other city on the hill.

CHAPTER VIII

MARCIA HADDON, AND THE MERRY WIFE OF WINDSOR

THE single hotel of Windsor was a raw and rambling structure, for the most part frequented by raftsmen and mill hands. Joslin knew the proprietor, commonly known as Old Man Bent. That worthy stood quizzically regarding the young man, as the latter accosted him, and explained his almost penniless plight.

"Ye're plumb wore out, an' I can see it," said he. "Go in an' go to bed, atter ye've had a squar' meal, an' don't say nothin' about pay ontel times is better fer ye. Hit's many a dollar ye've paid to me, raftin' times."

Without further word, Joslin stepped into the dining room, and ate his first real meal for more than a week—ate ravenously, like any animal; and all that night he slept in a stupor of exhaustion.

When morning came once more he found his host. "I've got to git work," said he. "I kain't live here withouten I go to work right away. Ye know that."

Old Man Bent looked at him with pursed lips. "I'll tell ye what I'd do. Ye go down to Jones' brick yard

an' see if he'll give ye something to do fer a little while, ontel ye kin turn yoreself somehow."

The Windsor brick yard was run by a man by the name of Jones, who himself was not above driving a canny bargain, as he noted the stalwart figure of this applicant.

"I could put ye to work carryin' the molds from the mixer out to the dryin' yard," said he. "Sixty cents a day ain't much, but I kin git plenty of men at that. They mostly work barefoot, anyways." He glanced down at Joslin's shoeless feet, worn with the hard going.

So this was David Joslin's first encounter with the great outside world—for so even this village might be termed. Without murmur he went to work—twelve hours a day, with a back-breaking load each trip, carrying the wet clay of the molded bricks. The reflex of the wound in his head gave him a continuous headache. He still was weak. But he worked that day and the next. Then once more he went to his landlord.

"I kain't nohow make it even," said he. "I don't feel right payin' ye only fifteen cents a day, when I know ye charge everybody else a dollar. I been eating only two meals here now, trying to make it easier for ye."

Old Man Bent understood the stern quality of the mountain character well enough, and accepted, at its

face value, the rugged independence of the man before him.

"I'll tell ye what I'd do if I was in yore place, Dave," said he. "I'd go over to the Widow Dunham's place. She ain't got no man there now to hep her aroun', an' her regular price for board is only three-fifty a week. Maybe ye could manage to git a place to sleep an' three squar' meals a day."

After his fashion, silent, Joslin nodded, and forthwith went over to the boarding house of the Widow Dunham, a few streets distant from the hotel. He placed before that dame a fair statement of his own case, explaining that sixty cents a day was all he was earning, that he was very, very hungry, but that he could perhaps do with two meals a day. The widow smilingly estimated the tall young man before her, reviving a somewhat ancient dimple as she did so.

"Men is mostly troublesome," said she. "I've married two of 'em in my time. The first one was kilt out in the hills, and the second one was so triflin' he went out into the Blue Grass, an' I never did hear from him no more. I orter have some sort of man around the place to fetch in the water an' git me some wood now an' then. Ye come in and take keer of them chores like, an' pay me fifty cents a day, an' we'll call it even.

"Ye'd orter have a pair of shoes, by right," added she, "an' maybe a coat. Sometimes I have quality come

here to my place—I'm expectin' some any time now from outside. Mr. James B. Haddon of New York, him an' his wife is comin' in, he writ me. Natural, if I have folks like them around ye'd orter have a pair of shoes an' a good coat, anyways of nights."

She stepped back into her own well-ordered domicile, and presently emerged with a pair of shoes, not much worn. To these she added a coat, which, beyond question, never had seen fabrication in this part of the world.

"Here's something that Mr. Haddon lef' here, last time he was in. He goes back into the hills, or leastways he intended to if he ever got started to it, because he's the Company man. He threw them things away, so I reckon ye'll be welcome to 'em."

Joslin took these articles and looked them over. To put on another man's clothing was to him the hardest trial of all his life. Proud as the proudest of aristocrats, it cut him to the core to use these things thus offered. Concluding that it was his duty, he accepted it with the other punishments which life was offering him.

"Thank ye, ma'am," said he. "They'll come right handy, I'm sure." He did not smile as he spoke.

As for the Widow Dunham, she herself did smile, as he went out the gate. "Hit'll be right good to have a man around the house onct more," said she to herself.

This was of a morning. As dusk fell, Joslin appeared once more at the door of his new home. He was not left long idle.

"I'll tell ye, Mister," said the widow, "I ain't axin no questions about how ye come here—I'm mountain myself, an' I kin keep my mouth shet. If ye'll fetch me some worter from the well yander, an' go down to the river an' git me some slabs fer the fire, an' saw 'em up, I'll be obleeged to ye. Then ye'll have yore supper. How ye beginnin' to feel now?" She turned her glance to the wound in the back of Joslin's head.

He made no answer, but accepted the pail which she handed him, and presently brought in the water. He never in his life had taken orders from a man, far less from a woman, and no duties could have been harder for him than these menial ones of the household.

About the second portion of his errand, Joslin went to the slab pile, which lay above the saw mill near the boat landing, which itself was about a half a mile above the last of the locks of the Kentucky River. As he rose, having gathered his armful of bits of sound pieces for firewood, he heard the chug of a power boat, so unusual a thing in that part of the world that for a time he stood motionless, looking at the craft as it approached. It was a river skiff, driven by an outboard motor, the latter operated by a stranger, perhaps a hand from some garage in a downstream town.

The other occupants of the craft might at a glance be seen to be "furrin," as the local phrase would go. A stout, middle-aged man, florid of face, exceedingly well clad, immaculate as to collar, cuffs and shirt bosom, sat in the bow, looking anxiously ahead. Midships was a yet more extraordinary figure for that locality—a young woman, perhaps twenty-four or twenty-five years of age, nicely turned out in tailor-made traveling suit, and wearing gloves, apparel unheard of for a woman in the mountains. Of extremely beautiful face was she, with large, somber gray eyes, defined strongly by the dark brows above them, and a mouth of exceeding sweetness, which softened the grave repose of her features. Withal, a figure of striking comeliness and grace for any surroundings, she was a miracle, an apparition, here in this rude hill town. Joslin had never seen her like nor dreamed it. She was a creature of another world.

It bid fair to be a clumsy landing on the part of the steersman, who seemed none too well accustomed to his task. "Damn it! Look out!" irritably called the man in the bow. "You'll have us over yet. Lend a hand there, can't you?"

His last remark was addressed to Joslin, who without noting the imperative nature of the words, at once dropped his armful of slabs, and hurried to the edge of the wharf, steadying the bow of the boat as it came in. He made fast the painter at a projecting bit of

the wharf floor, and went so far as to steady the stranger by the arm, as he clumsily stepped out from the boat. The latter himself gave a hand to the other passenger.

"Well, here we are, Marcia," said he; "end of the world, anyway as far as I've been myself before. So we're even at that, anyhow."

"Well, stranger," said he, turning once more to Joslin, "who are you?"

Joslin knew that he was meeting none other than the "quality folks," Mr. and Mrs. Haddon of New York—the man whose coat and shoes he was at that time wearing. But with his genius at reticence, he made no comment.

"I jest come down from the Widow Dunham's to git a little firewood," said he. "Kin I hep ye up with any of yore things, ma'am?"

The strangely beautiful young woman stood looking at him gravely and unsmilingly, yet kindly. Instinctively, he recognized the soul of a real gentlewoman.

"Thank you," said she to him now. "There are some things there"—she hesitated, as she turned toward the boat.

"That's all right, ma'am. I'll fetch up a bunch of 'em when I come."

So he turned to these additional duties, so foreign to his life and taste; but suddenly it seemed to him that

just in return for that gaze of hers, not critical, not appraising him as some wild creature, not twitting him or degrading him, he would be willing to do almost anything in the world.

The newcomers were welcomed most effusively by the Widow Dunham herself, who escorted them into the best room of the house, and dusted off all the chairs with her apron, talking meanwhile volubly, and assuring them of her great delight at seeing them.

"Ye'll like it here, Ma'am, onct ye git used to it. I know yore husband right well—he was here last year. Air ye going back into the hills with him?"

"I think we are not quite sure about that yet," replied Mrs. Haddon. "It's very pleasant here, and I'm very tired. Do you suppose, Jim," said she, turning to her husband, "we could rest here for a while? It's very beautiful here, and I feel I'm going to be comfortable."

"That's how we try to make everybody feel," said the Widow Dunham. As she spoke to the woman, her eyes were upon the man. She was what was sometimes termed by her neighbors a marrying woman, and all men, married or single, she estimated with a keen eye and one experienced.

Haddon laughed a gusty laugh. "We're fifty miles short of the real Cumberlands here, Marcia. Our property runs from thirty to fifty or even sixty miles back in. To tell the truth, I haven't seen any of our

lands, although we've got more than a million invested in here."

"There's a power of land been bought—timber an' coal rights—for the last twenty year," assented the Widow Dunham. "Now they do tell me that they're a-findin' oil on some of that land up in yander. No tellin' what'll happen. There's even talk maybe there'll be a railroad up Hell-fer-Sartin one of these days afore long."

"Who told you about these things?" inquired the newcomer with a certain asperity. "Don't let it get out—don't talk about anything. By the way, I've got to get some sort of guide—some man who knows that country, and will take me in. Know of anybody?"

"Why, I don't know, Mr. Haddon," replied the widow ruminatingly, "who ye could git to take ye in. There's a young man I got around the house—he just come out."

"You don't mean the chap that was down at the boat-landing, do you? He's out in the yard now."

The Widow Dunham nodded contemplatively. "Yes. His name's David Joslin. Folks here knows the Joslins. He's a mounting man—borned an' bred up in there, fifty mile or so. He's one of the best raft steersmen on this river—been right wild in his time, but he ain't a-skeered of nothin'. That's the name he's got in these mountings. Maybe ye'd better ax him. He's a-workin' down to the brick yard now,

an' tell I give him yore old coat an' shoes he didn't have a stitch of clothes to his name, so to speak. He orter be willin' to go to hell for a dollar a day, an' I reckon he would."

"Well, I guess it'll be a hell of a trip up in there," said Haddon in reply. "What do you think, Marcia?"

But Marcia Haddon neither then nor at any later time, while partaking of the rude fare of the place, made any comment or expressed any discontent.

When they had finished their evening meal, Haddon led his wife out to the scanty gallery of the Widow Dunham's home, which, fenced off only by a broken paling against the street, looked out toward the western prospect of the hills. It was starlight now; the last glow of the sinking sun had disappeared. Here and there the slow sounds of the village life, now about to adjust itself to sleep, came to their ears. The fragrance of Haddon's fine cigar hung heavy in the air. They sat in silence. Haddon himself spoke more often to others than to his wife, so it would appear, and as for her, she was reticent by instinct. Her hands folded in her lap, she sat without comment, looking out toward the shadowy outline of the mountains which crowded down to the river.

At length Haddon rose and stepped back into the house, where he found the Widow Dunham standing in the hall in converse with the tall young mountaineer.

"Now, now, Amy," said he, advancing boldly, and

chucking the comely dame under the chin, "no visiting with anybody else but me, you understand—you haven't forgotten your old friend, have you?"

Joslin stepped back, somewhat astounded at this familiarity on the part of the stranger, but the latter only laughed in his face.

"Come along, young man," said he. "Come out on the porch. I want to talk to you for a while."

Joslin silently followed him out, and stood leaning against the rail of the gallery, as Haddon seated himself and began to explain what he had in his mind.

"See here, young man," said he. "They tell me you're from back in these mountains."

"I was born thar," said Joslin quietly.

"How'd you happen to come out here?" demanded the newcomer.

"I don't reckon it's ary man's business but my own," replied Joslin calmly.

"Well, you're going back in, aren't you, after a while?"

"I hadn't planned ter," said the young man. "I come out because I wanted ter. I'm a-goin' on Outside because I think I'd orter. I've got to work. What I want is a chancet."

"Well, I've got a chance for you."

"How do ye mean, stranger?"

"Near as I can tell, you're the very man I'm looking for. I'm the manager and vice-president of the

land company that's been buying stuff up in here for the last twenty years. We've got big holdings up in there—on the Laurel and Newfound, and the Rattlesnake and Buffalo, and Big Creek and Hell-fer-Sartin—we've got timber or coal or both located all through there. Now, listen—I'm in here now because there's talk of oil being found in there. Do you know anything about that?"

"They said they found some along some of the creeks not fur from whar I lived at."

"Have you ever heard anything about the railroad?"

"Yes, I was huntin' on Hell-fer-Sartin not more'n two months ago, an' I seen the stakes. There hain't no other way they kin git through but only jest that one."

"What is there in the way of moonshining going on in there? Any danger for an outsider to go in there?"

"I don't know nothin' at all about that," said David Joslin. "If I did I wouldn't tell ye."

Haddon sat frowning in silence for quite a while. "You're a funny lot, you mountain people," said he. "It's hard to do business with you."

"Some ways it mought be hard with me," replied Joslin.

"Well, don't you need the money that I could pay you?"

"There's nobody in the world needs money more'n I do. But I tolt ye I was headed the other way."

"Won't you go back in if I pay you the right wages?"

"No, I'm headed the other way."

"Well, now, listen," said Haddon irritably. "I need some native that knows those damned people. They tell me there's no such thing as roads, and you have to ride horseback or muleback wherever you want to go."

"That's so," replied the mountain man. "That's the onliest way. There hain't no sich thing as towns. Ye'd have to stop at the cabins. Ary man's welcome in there if they think he's all right, an' hain't a-lookin' fer nothin' er nobody."

"Oh, ho!" said Haddon, nodding understandingly. "Some trouble in there, eh? Well, I suppose you've seen your share of it." He grinned, as he looked at Joslin's head, where he had already noted the wound still unhealed.

"We don't say nothin' about sich matters in these hills, stranger," said Joslin quietly. "I'm a-tellin' ye if I went in thar with ye, ye'd be all right. But I hain't a-goin'. Ye kain't noways hire me."

"You're pretty danged independent," rejoined Haddon testily. "The woman here just told me that you're wearing my coat and my shoes right now. You must be hard up against it. Probably you were run out of these hills, and that's why you want to get outside.

And now I offer you fair pay—good pay, in fact—five dollars a day, or ten—just to go in and show me the timber and coal in that country, which you don't own but we own—and you say you won't go. Is that the way you treat a stranger?"

"Hit mought be the way to treat some strangers. As fer yore shoes an' coat, ye needn't say I'm a-wearin' 'em no longer." And so, deliberately, Joslin removed both the shoes and the coat, and stood coatless and barefooted, leaning against the gallery rail. He felt with a certain mortification the straight gaze of the young woman who had sat listening quietly. She spoke now.

"Mr. Joslin," said she in the low and even tones usual for her speaking voice, "I think you need those things. I quite understand how you feel about wearing them, but you will oblige me very much by keeping them until you are able to earn something better."

David Joslin, the shame, humiliation and hot anger of his heart struggling for mastery, turned to her, for the moment unable to speak. Then, silently as he had removed the offending articles, he replaced them.

"I thank ye, Ma'am," said he. "I reckon ye know better'n I do what I'd orter do."

"Well, sir," said she, turning toward him in the twilight a face that to him had the charm of an angel's, "my husband wants you to go back in there with him. Why is it impossible?"

"Hit's impossible, Ma'am, because when I make up my mind to a thing it's impossible to change it."

She sat looking at him curiously. Never in all her life had she seen a personality more powerful than that of this half-wild heathen who stood before her. The feel of the iron of his soul came upon her with strange effect.

"I'll not ask you why you're going outside," said she, after a moment.

"Jest because ye don't ax me, I'll tell ye," said Joslin suddenly. "I'm a-goin' outside to git a education."

"An education? There aren't many schools back in there?"

"Thar hain't no schools at all, Ma'am. My daddy war a preacher afore he died. I kain't read in no book to amount to nothin'. I kain't hardly write my own name. I'm a-goin' outside to git a education, because I'm a-goin' to build a college, Ma'am."

"A college!"

"Yes, Ma'am. I've got to do it. My people have been a-killin' each other in thar fer a hundred years. They kain't read, they kain't write, they kain't think. They hain't amountin' to nothin' whatever in the world. They're a great people, Ma'am. They're worth savin'. Well, it kind of come to me, in a sort of callin', that I'd orter save them. So, like I said, I'm a-goin' Outside to git me a education, soon as I kin."

The situation had suddenly become extraordinary. They waited for the mountaineer to go on, as presently he did.

"I've nuvver been further down the river than a couple of locks below. I've rafted here sence I was fourteen year old, but beyant the aidge of the hills I don't know nothin' of the world. Kin ye tell me whar I kin git my education? I don't reckon it'll take long —us mounting people larn right fast, Ma'am, when we git a chancet."

Then, after a pause, he went on, anxiously: "I'd do arything in the world to obleege ye, Ma'am—I'd go back in thar right now with ye if I had time. But ye see, I'm twenty-eight year old, an' I hain't got no time to lose."

Marcia Haddon sat in silence for a time and looked at her husband, who, moody and irritated, was flicking at the end of his cigar.

"This is rather an extraordinary thing, Jim," said she. "Do you suppose—is there any way we could help this man?"

"He doesn't seem any too willing to help us," replied Haddon grimly.

"I hain't said that, Mister," said Joslin evenly. "I'd do arything in the world I could fer ye people if it was right."

Haddon gave a snort of laughter. "You people in here haven't got a thing in the world—we bring in all

the money you'll ever see. You've got your resources to sell, and you aren't willing to sell them. Well, what do we owe you?"

"I don't know as ye owe us anything," said David Joslin, the slow color rising to his face. "As fer me, I don't allow to owe ary man arything very long. I reckon ye understand that, Ma'am."

He turned now to the woman, who nodded. He knew that she did understand.

"Is there anybody else that you can get to take us in there?" demanded Haddon impatiently. "Damn it all, I've almost a notion to turn around and go back again! For half a cent I'd advise the boys to charge off the whole damn thing to profit and loss. I'm sore —that's what I am."

The low voice of Marcia Haddon began once more, and as before she addressed not her husband, but the young mountain man.

"You spoke about going in at some later time," said she. "You interest me. My husband and I have no children. I'd like to do something—something for those children back there in the hills."

"Ma'am," said David Joslin, his voice trembling, "if ye could do that God A'mighty shore would nuvver fergit it, not whiles He had a universe to run. If ye could do that—I'd do arything in the world fer ye."

"Well, now, come," said Haddon, still argumenta-

tively. "You say you don't know anyone else that you can get to take me in there?"

"I don't, sir. The Gannts an' the Joslins is both a-ridin' now. Thar's been men killed, an' goin' to be more killed. If ary stranger went in thar, he'd be liable nuvver to come out at all."

"Well," rejoined Haddon, "I don't think my salary will warrant my going in there and getting shot up by some long-legged son-of-a-gun toting a squirrel rifle. That doesn't appeal to me any whatever. Listen, man!" Haddon sat up suddenly in his chair as an idea flashed upon his keen business brain. "Listen now," and he extended an arresting forefinger. "I'll tell you what I'll do with you. You know that country and I don't. I'll pay you ten dollars a day and all your expenses to New York if you'll go back with me. I want you to address a meeting of my company and some other companies that are in the business. That'll do just as well, if you tell a good straight story, as if I went in there myself. You do know the country, don't you?"

"I know it day an' night, through an' through. I know every coal seam in them hills. I know most every old-time poplar tree an' big white oak from Hell-fer-Sartin to the mouth of Rattlesnake, an' from Big Creek to the Main Forks. I don't know nothin' else."

"Now then—now then—now then," resumed Had-

don excitedly—"that's the answer! That certainly is the answer to the whole thing. Now, you come back with us—I'll get you some clothes, and that sort of thing, of course. I'll pay your railroad fare and expenses, and ten dollars a day, and I'll keep you in New York until this business is over. In return for that, all I want you to do is to tell my men what you know about that country—how many trees there are to an acre on that Hell-fer-Sartin tract—where the oil croppings are, so far as you know—where the railroad's got to come. Can you show it on a map?"

"I don't know about maps, stranger," said David Joslin, "but if ye could tell me the names of the places on the maps, like rivers, ye know—ye see, I kain't read very well, not yit."

"Sure, sure, I'll fix that all right. I'll show it for you just like a book. A child could read it."

"I kain't read no better'n a child, Mr. Haddon, but if ye kin show me whar the creeks is marked on the map I kin show ye whar the railroad has got to go. I kin put my finger on every place whar oil has been found, er gas—ye know, thar's places whar gas has been burnin' fer forty year, ever sence the War, an' thar didn't nobody know about it."

"There doesn't anyone know that there's a continuance of the big West Virginia anticline right through these mountains," rejoined Haddon grimly. "Oil?—There's got to be oil in here, and I know it. Our

geologists figured that all out before you ever told me there had been oil found in here. Why, man—I can't afford *not* to take you back with me. And you can't afford not to come.'

"What do ye think of this, Ma'am?" said David Joslin, turning toward the quiet young woman. "I reckon ye mought be ashamed of me if I went along with ye." He flushed dully.

"No, Mr. Joslin," said she, quickly. "You'll learn. You wouldn't be unhappy, I think. I want you to feel that we want to help you. Let my husband take care of the business part. I'll see what I can do toward getting you a chance to study. If money is good for anything, Jim, it ought to be good for just some such thing as this."

"Is it a trade, man?" said the Northerner suddenly.

"I believe I'll go with ye, Ma'am," said David Joslin quietly for his reply. He did not speak to the man.

It was a trade! When Jimmy Haddon stepped back once more into the house, to the side of the table where the flickering oil lamp stood, he caught the Widow Dunham gaily about the shoulders, chucked her under the chin once more, and kissed her fair on the lips. It chanced he did this just as his wife came into the hall, so that she saw the whole transaction. She made no comment. She also had made her trade, years ago, when she married. If she had lost, she would not yet complain. But Joslin saw the hot flush on her cheek.

CHAPTER IX

POLLY PENDLETON

"WELL, Marcia, here we are," said James Haddon, as at last their long railway journey drew to its close in the swift sweep of the train up the gates of the great city by the sea. "Better begin to round up your wild man—I saw him standing in the vestibule looking out of the window as though he was in a trance. What are we going to do with him, now we've got him?"

"We'll take him with us to our home, of course, Jim. He'd be lost anywhere else. He knows no more than a child."

"Pretty husky child, some ways," said Haddon. "Well, all right, all right! I suppose you're glad he's different from me. You don't seem to have a lot of use for me any more, some way—you've been like a clam ever since we left New York, and you're more like a clam now that we're getting back. There's worse fellows in the world than Jimmy Haddon, and maybe you'll live to see it yet. I'll show you, if this deal goes through—and it will if your wild friend makes good.

"But now here we are getting into the tube—I'd better catch the wild man, or he may get scared and jump off the train. All right—we'll take him up home."

The rushing whirl of the city received them—the city, a place occupied, so it seemed to this stranger, with sad-faced madmen hurrying here and yon without purpose. Mad—mad—hopelessly mad—so it all seemed to David Joslin as, himself frightened with the noise, the clamorings, the uncertainty of it all, he finally emerged from the gates of the railway station and stood close to the side of the woman who now made his main reliance in this new world of the great Outside.

A deferential man in livery came toward them and led them to a long, shining limousine car which stood at the curb. A moment later they were whirling away through the crowded streets, escaping death every instant, so it seemed to the newcomer, by the miracle of a second's fraction. He held his peace, as he had now for five days in a new, mad world of which he had not dreamed. They passed on out through the crowded traffic street until they reached paved ways leading to the north, and so, after a long and steady flight of the car, drew up at the entrance of a great apartment building on the river drive.

Joslin followed in. He never in his life before had been in a passenger elevator. He felt a strange sinking

at the pit of his stomach, and caught instinctively at the bars of the gate. He was still less at ease when they led him into the silent and dim apartments where Haddon and his wife lived, as luxurious as any of the Riverside, the rent of which each month was more than any farm in all the Cumberlands would bring in a year.

But Joslin was now in the home of a gentlewoman. Quietly she took him in hand, relieving his embarrassment, setting him at his ease, showing him where he might live, and telling him kindly what might be expected of him. He looked about him at his own room with awe. These furnishings to him were so unbelievably luxurious that he dared not sit down upon a chair. He gazed upon the bed, with its yellow coverlet of silk, with but one resolve—he would sleep upon the floor, but never venture further—nor did he. And when presently they called him to table he felt his heart sink yet further in these strange surroundings, so that he could not eat. He had accosted as "Mister" the servant who went to his room with him—he saw the same man now, and wondered that he stood, and did not eat with the others—wondered that no one noticed him nor the white-capped maid who passed. Surely it was all a strange, mad world.

"Well," said Haddon, after his hurried finishing of his own meal, "I've got to get down to the little old shop right away, Marcia. They'll not be expecting me, of course, but it's a good piece of busi-

ness that I'm back when I am, and just the way I am."

"I presume you'll have plenty to do," commented his wife.

"Listen! I'll tell you what I'll do. I'm going to get together all the directors of the Company, and we'll pull off a little dinner at the Williston—in the Gold Room. How'll that do, my Christian friend?" said he, grinning at Joslin as he stepped to the hall table and picked up his own hat and gloves.

"Of course, I can't do that right away," he continued, turning back, his stick over his arm, his well-brushed hat now on his head. "Maybe a couple of days. I'll be busy. Maybe I'll have to stay down at the club tonight, Marcia. I'll check up about dinner time."

He did not call up at about dinner time, nor at all until past noon the next day, when he explained that he had been crowded at the office and unable to get his own apartments by phone—explanations with which his wife was fairly familiar.

As for Joslin, he passed the two days in what seemed to him a continual kaleidoscope of madhouse change. Now in charge of one of the chauffeurs, sometimes in the more gracious company of his hostess, he spun up and down the streets of the great city, looking at the untold thousands of its inhabitants, wondering at its stately buildings, wondering at the beauty of its parks, so like and yet so unlike the woods he had always

known. In the evening, in his own room, he read steadily, as best he might, spelling out the complex, stern theology of old John Calvin. Now and again he raised his eyes and wondered what Calvin would have done had he been here.

They brought to him now certain other clothing of Jimmy Haddon's, a trifle short, a trifle large, but serving better than anything he yet had had. He was not happy in all this—no man ever was more unhappy in all his life than David Joslin now. Moreover, there came to his heart, every moment of the day and night, the most exquisite of pain—nostalgia—the actual illness of homesickness. He longed unspeakably for the sight of the mountains, for the smell of the wood-smoke of the fires, the look of the stars at night, the pink of the dawn when morning came. Life here was a fearsome thing, and long and hard seemed the unknown road that lay before him.

Haddon came home after his second night away and announced that all was in readiness for the great banquet of the men whom he represented in his business affiliations.

"I'm going to give you your first chance in public speaking now, Joslin," said he. "Believe me, you'll have an attentive audience for once, if you never do again—weren't you talking of being a preacher, or something? Talk business, son, straight business—that's all we want to hear. If you make good, you'll

have the time of your life. Help us, and we'll help you—see?

"How about clothes?" He turned questioningly to his wife, who was in the room at the time. "Of course it's evening dress—is there a spare suit of mine around anywhere?"

Marcia Haddon looked at the two for a moment. "Perhaps Mr. Joslin would not prefer it," said she.

Joslin shook his head. "No," said he. "I hain't a-goin' to change from these clothes I've got on now. I'm used to 'em a little."

Haddon's companion, therefore—and Haddon rather prided himself on his invariably well-groomed appearance—presented something of a noticeable turn-out when they entered the lobby of the great hotel where the banquet was to be, but he did not notice the apologetic grimaces Haddon gave in response to certain lifted eyebrows of his friends whom he met here and there.

"Well, come along, old man," said he to his guest, at length. "We'll leave our coats and hats here, and go and see if we can find some more of the fellows."

He was not at a loss as to the place of search. The long glazed and marbled bar of the Williston at that time was thronged with hundreds, much athirst. Behind the vast reaches of mahogany stood many bartenders, all busy. Men in evening dress, with top hats and beautifully fitting evening wear, men impeccable

in gloves and glasses and fit for presentation in any city of the world—stood here, laughing, talking, jesting, drinking. One after another all these now accosted Haddon, some with a sly word, a glance, a hint, a jest—things which he hushed down as soon as might be, for he knew the keen suspicion of the mountaineer.

"Well, what are you going to have to drink?" said he to Joslin at length, edging his own way up to the bar. "We've got to lay some sort of a foundation for the dinner, you know. What kind of cocktail do you want—Martini?"

"I never did drink nothin' but plain corn liquor," said Joslin. "If I could have jest a leetle of that now, maybe——"

"Nonsense! Have a cocktail. It's too early for hard liquor yet. Make him another, John," and he nodded to the bartender.

Joslin raised the little glass, whose contents seemed, in color at least, not unfamiliar to him as a mountain man, but he drank no more than half of the contents, and then set down the glass. It was his first and only cocktail. He made no comment as his host urged him, but moved away from the bar. Haddon himself remained to finish two or three more of the insidious potions before he himself turned and with the others began to move toward the quarters set apart for the banquet party.

By this time the crowd was much like the usual

male banquet crowd—a trifle flushed of face, a trifle garrulous of tongue, each in his own heart happy, and each in his own belief quite witty and very much aplomb. They were seated in due course at the long tables arranged after the fashion of a Maltese cross. Haddon, it seemed, was to preside. He placed his guest at his own right, in the place of honor.

"Trust little old Jimmy to pull a thing off," said one merchant to another. "He never went down to that country for nothing. He's got the goods with him, and you can gamble on that. He told me himself how he caught this wild mountain man and brought him on to talk to us tonight. He knows every foot of the land in there, and he can tell us the whole works. Coal—gas—oil—those lands of ours are full of it! Looks like we were going to make a killing. Trust Jimmy. He's one grand little live wire, if we've got one in our village."

The dinner wore on, much as these things usually run—the original stage of hilarity somewhat modified under the sobering influence of food. It was all strange to Joslin, who, so it seemed to him, scarcely had one plate set before him before it was taken away and replaced by yet another. Few noticed what he did.

Presently, when all were well forward with coffee and cigars, Haddon rapped loudly on the table as he rose. A change came over the entire personnel of the assemblage. Here but now had been a riotous

meeting of full-blooded men, young men, middle-aged men, gray-haired men, bent on nothing better than drinking and eating. But now anyone who glanced down these tables would have seen a steady keenness, a fixity of purpose, on the face of practically every man present. They were hard-headed American business men on the instant now, each man ready for the purpose which really had brought him here. Money—the pursuit of money—the keen zest of the game of business—that was the real intoxication of these men, and not that of alcohol. They listened now in perfect silence to what their representative might have to say.

Haddon told them briefly something of his late trip into the Cumberlands, told why it had been ended so abruptly for a second time, admitted that he had never been over much of the Company's land holdings, in the mountains, and explained the reasons why that was a difficult thing. He showed that it was necessary to have a guide to make a successful exploration of the properties in that country, and adverted to the benefits of direct testimony rather than hearsay, explaining how he had brought this mountaineer, who had spent all his life in the middle of the Company's properties, to the city with him to tell them his own first-hand story of the land.

A large map hung on the wall, and to this he adverted from time to time. Joslin's eyes followed him. Yes, he knew these streams—he could locate this or

that territory familiar to himself, here on the map. He knew on the ground what Haddon pointed out upon the map. So presently, when they called upon him to speak, he rose with no great diffidence on his own part.

They greeted him with a generous round of applause, which startled him, for he had never heard anything of the sort. But after all David Joslin was a man of great dignity and self-respect, with great powers of mind as well as of body. And there lurked somewhere within him, as in so many of these strong characters of the hills, natural instincts of the orator.

He spoke strongly, simply, powerfully, with no attempt at embellishment, but in such terms as left no doubt whatsoever as to his meaning. After a time he stepped to the map, and, pointing out here and there, explained as nearly as he himself knew the nature of the Company's holdings. He told them where the coal cropped out at the headwaters of this or that creek, told them that on some of the mountain sides three veins of coal had been known ever since he could remember, the middle vein over eight feet thick, the lower four feet thick, and that nearest to the mountain top almost as deep. He explained to them that there was coal over more than a hundred miles of that country, as he knew, and told them how nearly everyone mined his own coal on his own land, and did not trouble to cut wood for much of the year.

As for the new strikes of oil, Joslin could put his finger upon the map where every one of these discoveries had been made. He said that his own people cared little for that, for they had long grown to believe there was no way for them to get out into the world. He explained to them that there were no roads in that country, that logs were dragged down the mountain side by cattle, rolled into the shallow streams by hand labor, and left to the chance of the infrequent "tides." He told them that in many of those streams there were logs enough to touch end to end from one end of the creek to the other—logs enough bedded in the sand to floor the creek entirely for half its length—black walnut logs two and a half feet through—white oak logs three and a half feet in diameter—and poplar four and a half feet. Their eyes glistened as he went on telling all these things naturally, simply, naively, as one fully acquainted with them. He explained to them the ways of all these methods of logging, how no one could run a saw mill in that region with profit, how no raftsman ever made more than a living at his work, hard as it was. Then he told them how he himself had seen the stakes of the new railroad line coming across the head of Hell-fer-Sartin and making for the upper waters of Big Creek, and passing thence on to the older railway lines.

"When the railroad comes, gentle-*men*," said he,

"things has got to change in thar. We've been alone —no one knows much about our lands. Ye come in thar twenty years ago, when no one cared for nothin'. Ye bought yore land fer skercely a dollar a acre, most of it, an' thar's trees on it thar that's wuth ten an' twenty dollars fer every log in 'em, onct ye git 'em out, an' two, three, four logs to the tree. The railroad will let the world in, an' it'll let us out. I reckon the time has come fer that. All I ask ye in turn fer what I'm a-tellin' ye, is to treat my people fair. Give them a fair value fer what they've got. They're pore, they're ignerint, they're blind. I'm as ignerint as the wust of 'em. But we're squar' with ye. We want ye to be squar' with us."

A blank silence greeted this last remark. Men looked from one to the other. Once in a while there might have been a cynical smile or sneer that passed. After he had spoken for an hour, perhaps more than an hour, and had answered all such questions as they asked him, David Joslin sat down. A voice in the back part of the room arose.

"What's the matter with Jimmy Haddon?"

A vociferous chorus answered. Joslin did not understand the methods of these men, but vaguely he gathered that what he had said had been well received.

On the whole he felt content. Now, he said to himself, on the very next day he would go about his own

business. He would leave this place, which confused him so much. He was done with the city now. He had done his duty.

But this did not by any means close the entertainment of the evening as these men conceived it. As they had been revelers and again business men, so now once more they laid aside the habit of affairs and turned again to the business of banqueting. Waiters came quickly and filled up glasses, large glasses, with bubbling wine. Again mingling voices arose, laughter, jests. The glasses were filled again, and yet again. The business of the day was over. Joy was to be more unconfined.

Men drew back curtains at the head of the hall, revealing a little platform where stood a piano, which was wheeled into place. At a signal from Haddon there entered an orchestra of foreign sort, and they mingled music and jangling discord of the usual kind, perhaps among other things a melody or so of the hour; for voices arose, and sounds of hands and feet keeping time. A basso, very knock-kneed and small of chin, appeared from some unknown region, sang a solo, bowed and disappeared. A quartet of negro singers furnished rather better entertainment, so it seemed. And then men began to push back their chairs, so that they might easily see the entrance of the room.

All at once a round of general and vociferous ap-

plause arose. Jimmy Haddon arose and hastened to greet the latest comers.

There stood in the doorway two young women, dressed with a certain similarity, their long cloaks held together by clasps, their arms in long white gloves. There were two, but there might as well have been but one, for the older of the concert team of Pendleton and Stanton—Pollie Pendleton and Nina Stanton, known in every theater of the land that year—lacked so much of the charm of her companion that she quite resigned herself to the amiable role of foil.

They were young women of that sort known in Bablylon and Boston. Whence they come, who shall say? Whither they go, who knows—the young women of the world, the beloved and the forgotten. The world has always had them, and perhaps will always have them—young, splendidly beautiful, splendidly alluring—who come from none knows whence, and who go no one knows whither.

The assembled males applauded when they saw these two young women standing there—short of skirt, low of slipper, low of gown. All but one rose gaily to welcome them. One man sat transfixed.

There was revealed to David Joslin, in the person of Polly Pendleton, such a vision as never had he

known in all his life, a dream which he not yet had dreamed, nor could have dreamed, so wholly outside of all his possible experience must it have been called. He never before had seen woman at her frank best in sheer riot of the beauty of her sex. It awed him.

She was a woman, but scarce seemed that to him. To his eyes she was not woman, but some supernal thing, a Presence, a Being. And in the sheer fact that she was of his genus, of his species, that she was woman and he was man, he sat suddenly exalted, glorified himself, superman—for now at last his eyes had seen!

She smiled at them all in her swift and comradely fashion, and stepped promptly toward the little platform. Not a man there who did not know Polly Pendleton of the Follies, the best-liked girl on the stage that year. Singer, violinist, dancer—she had made her way up by one or the other of her arts or all of them, until now she might use all or either, as she liked.

A woman of about middle stature was Polly Pendleton, of covetably slender and firm-set figure. Her eyes were large and dark, with long lashes, her face a strong, clean oval, her skin clear, her teeth brilliant, her head a mass of short, dark curls. So much might be said of many women, perhaps, but Polly Pendleton had some strange plus charm of her own, that charm for which managers pay any price. She seemed the very spirit, the very embodiment of life, youth, eager-

ness—of vital joy itself. The thought of evil could not touch her, so sweet and clean she seemed, in every fiber of her being there was such life and such joy in living. Her gestures were those of the young animal, of the bird, careless, unstudied. She had no art, but succeeded through her lack of art and through her own zest, her sheer vitality.

When Polly Pendleton stood waiting for something, interested in anything, keyed up, not even her feet could rest upon the floor. She had a strange way sometimes, even when talking to one, of dancing up and down on her toes, light as a feather, her young limbs seeming not to feel the weight of her body. There seemed an ethereal air about her, as though she needed not to walk, needed not to stand, unless she liked.

She stood now before them, having drawn from beneath her coat her cherished violin, whose music had pleased so many thousands. Obviously she intended first to play. She laid aside her cloak and stood, eager, interested, slightly leaning forward, anxious, dancing up and down upon her little feet. Youth, life, joy, vitality, freedom from care, absolute ignorance and disregard of toil or trouble or anxiety—there stood Polly Pendleton.

She laid the violin to her cheek and, her eyes now aside and high, drew a strong, firm bow across the strings. When she did this she drew out the heart and soul from the body of David Joslin.

But David Joslin never really had heard the violin before. Of actual music he knew nothing. He had never heard a master of any instrument in all his life. But the sound of the violin itself, last keen climax in this atmosphere of exhilaration, where now the young spirit of this one fragile girl commanded the strong masculine spirit of all these massed men—for David Joslin constituted an overwhelming experience.

She finished her number, and when the roar of applause had ceased turned to her associate, who seated herself at the piano. They both sang—one of their duets; and as part of this Polly Pendleton herself danced—whirling about in pirouettes where her toes seemed scarce to find a footing, her round, strong limbs insouciantly exposed. She was but the spirit of youth, of life, of joy.

Now certain of the critical began to demand something known earlier as especially delectable.

"Sing us the real one, Polly!" they cried. "Sing us 'The Only Man,' why don't you?"

"Yes; that's it—that's it—give us 'The Only Man,' Polly;" and vigorous handclapping ensued.

She stood facing them again at the little raised dais, her lips parted, her white teeth visible under her short, smiling upper lip. She was always eager to please, counting not the cost of herself—a rich and generous soul indeed was hers. Not so much her fault as ours

was it that she was here, one of the sacrifices, the perishing imperishables of the world.

But Polly began to sing. The words matter little. It was the chorus which had brought her fame. She left the dais now, and advanced down the long table, her whole face a-laugh. Her eyes were fixed on a certain large, red-faced and very bald gentleman who sat halfway down the table at the left. Him she approached, singing as she came. She bent above him, put an arm about his face, a hand under his chin, and drew his head back as she bent above and sang to him.

"For you are my Baby!" sang Polly Pendleton. "You are my Baby! You're the only, only, *only* man for me."

Roars of laughter greeted this. They sang in chorus with her: "You're the only, only, *only* man for me!"

"Come here, Polly," called this man and that. "This way! You certainly are the only girl for me."

But Polly Pendleton was back at the head of the table once more, still singing, still light of foot, still gay of song. She stood and faced them just for a moment. Something she saw which seemed to arrest her own attention—a grave, unsmiling face, with eyes like coals, a white face which looked straight at hers. . . .

It was no more than a pace or two for Polly to

reach the head of the table, to push a hand out against the raised one of Jimmy Haddon as he sat there flushed and laughing. The next instant she had stopped, and with the audacity of her very nature, so used to being allowed its own freakish will, she passed an arm about the head of David Joslin, a hand beneath his chin. She drew his white face back, looked down into his eyes, and sang—for a little while at least—*"You're the only, only, only man for me!"*

Something in the tense tableau they saw—some note, undefinable, caused every man of that virile assemblage to cease his laughter and applause. They stared. They saw the great hands of the man close tight about the white wrists of Polly Pendleton. She ceased to stroke the strong hair of David Joslin, and stood back, finishing her song out of touch and out of tune. Some thought her voice quavered just a little. But she sprang back tiptoe again upon the little dais, and finished boldly—yes, and added thereto the notes of her violin. None the less, there had been a scene. Someone had not played the game. And they must take care of Polly.

They broke into applause. Someone started to pass a plate down the table. It was heaped up with money, in great part yellow in color. Coins fell on the floor—but there were no small silver ones. Some near by flung money in the general direction of the little platform where the two young women stood, smiling and

bowing deeply—smiling at what they knew to be the success of their little offerings that evening.

"Here you go, Polly!" as one man after another cast toward her something folded. And Polly, grave and a trifle white now, leaving her associate bowing on the stage, passed down the aisle, met the heaped plate on its way, stopped here and stopped there, laughing and talking, chattering like some innocent child, picking up money—money—more money than David Joslin had thought there was in all the world. He alone gave nothing, for he had naught to give—only the happiness and peace of a human soul.

There was so much tribute that Polly made great show of thrusting part of it beneath her garter, till she could hold no more in that fashion. Some she thrust into her bosom, and then, turning, carried the rest of it to her partner, who happily was provided with a reticule.

Everybody laughed—everybody was pleased. It had cost them very little—perhaps a few hundred dollars—to make these two girls feel that they had made a hit. The wine was excellent. Everything had been splendid in every way. The cost? Why, what Jimmy Haddon had done for them in bringing this geezer here to tell them about their property would bring them more than ten thousand times the cost of the banquet, or the cost of the whole investment.

And so, after a time, the banquet ended, very late—

ended, indeed, when Polly Pendleton and her friend, laughing and kissing their hands—Polly with her violin tucked under her arm and her cloak over all—turned once more to the door of the crystal and gold room of the Williston banquet suite. Men rose and waved serviettes at them, shouted good-by, asked them to come again. Haddon himself walked with Polly Pendleton to the door, kissed her hand, bowed good-night.

As he turned back he saw standing, staring at him fixedly, the tall, white-faced figure of the mountaineer, whom he had utterly forgotten. The eyes of David Joslin were like coals.

"Some girl, eh—what?" said Haddon admiringly to his uncouth friend.

But Joslin made him no reply. What he had seen, what he had felt that night, was epochal, abysmal for him. He had looked into her eyes. He had seen her face framed in her dark hair—had caught the very fragrance of her hair itself. He was mad.

A motor car stood below, waiting for the popular team of Pendleton and Stanton. It whirled them now far uptown, to the little buffet flat which made their nome. Nina, matter-of-fact as usual, busied herself about her preparations for the close of the day's work. But, singularly enough, Polly, usually riante and active to the very last moment of the day, sat, cigarette in hand, silent, somewhat triste.

"What's the matter, Polly?—Why don't you get ready?—I'm sleepy as an owl. What are you wolfing about?"

"What makes you ask that, Nina?"

"Well, it's something."

Silence for a time, and then Polly spoke. "How do you think it went to-night, Nina?"

"Well, all I've got to say," replied that worthy young woman, "if it went this well about one or two more nights a week or a month, we could retire and live along the Sound like ladies the rest of our lives."

"I wish it was all back," said Polly Pendleton, somberly.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, the money."

"Well, of all *things!*" exclaimed Nina Stanton, staring at her partner. "What's the matter with you, Polly? Have you gone crazy? What's set *you* thinking this way? Of all *things!*"

"Well, it was that man, maybe. He mighty near queered me. It's always a man, you know—a girl can't get away from that."

Nina still looked at her in wonderment. "You're out of your head, kid," said she. "If anyone in little old New York ought to be happy tonight, it's you, sitting right there grouching like you are. They didn't see me—I wasn't there at all. You were the whole works. I hate to take the money from you—and I

wouldn't if I didn't know you'd only spend it. I have to watch you like a mother, kid."

But Polly sat, shaking her head in somber discontent, the little blue rings of her cigarette rising undisturbed before her.

"Who was he, Nina?" she asked after a time.

"Who was who? The big bald-face guy down the table?—that was Rankin of Rankin and Swan. He acted like a good sport. As for Jimmy Haddon, he must have chipped in fifty, anyways."

But Polly was shaking her head from side to side.

"Oh, of course, you mean the reuben at the head of the table you were joshing. It was the hit of the evening."

"Was it, though?" said Polly vaguely.

"The hit of the evening, kid. That's what brought them across."

"Well," said Polly, "it was a raw deal for him, I suppose. Look here." She held up her wrist. It showed a blue line about it. "I never felt a man's hand like that in all my life. He could have broken my arm if he'd wanted to." She pushed a bracelet reflectively up and down across the bruised ring which the clutch of Joslin's fingers had left upon her white skin.

"Oh, I guess he liked it all right," commented Nina casually. "They mostly do."

"That's the trouble," rejoined Polly sagely. "I

can't tell how it was, but somehow that man made me feel *ashamed!* There was something in his face—I can't tell you what. Ever since, I've been feeling as if this money didn't belong to us. I've a notion to give you my share, Nina."

"You can't, kid. I've always been on the level with you. I'll take you over my knee and give you a spanking now if you don't shut up. You talk silly. An ordinary hayseed from the hills—you better be thinking of Rankin with his private yachts, or little old Jimmy, your solid. You can't complain. You'd better be content with what you got."

"What do you mean, Nina? I only say I feel sort of ashamed. I never felt my skirts were short before in all my life. I did then."

Nina only turned with a short laugh as she stooped to unfasten her own shoes in her progress towards her night toilet. Polly arose and went to the panel where protruded the handle of the wall bed which these two loyal and thrifty partners occupied in common. She pulled down the bed, went to the little wardrobe for her own night robe, and, moodily silent, prepared herself for sleep. At last she paused.

"Nina," she said again, with a certain imperative quality in her tone.

"What is it, kid?" demanded her good-humored friend.

"You know what I think?"

"No, I don't. I don't think you think at all."

"Well, I'll tell you. Sometimes I think I've had about enough of this sort of thing. I'm sore on it. It makes me sick. All those men——"

"But if it was the 'only, only, *only* man'?" grinned Nina.

"I wonder," began Polly to herself—"I wonder now——"

But what she wondered she did not vouchsafe. It was some time later, in the darkness of the night, that Nina felt a hand upon her arm, shaking her.

"What's the idea, kid?" she said sleepily. "Can't you let a fellow sleep? I'm almost dead."

"Nina, tell me!" demanded Polly, a strange earnestness in her voice. "Am I bad? Nina—tell me—am I as bad as that?"

"Oh, shut up, kid," said Nina, bored. "Go on to sleep. There's bats in your garret to-night, sure thing."

CHAPTER X

MR. HADDON'S POINT OF VIEW

HADDON, puffy about the eyes, trembling of fingers, sat at table the next day offering a very fine example of the morning after organized hilarity. The man opposed to him, haggard and hollow-eyed, might have been suspected of indulgences similar to those of his host, although such would have been an unjust accusation.

Haddon found two stiff drinks of whisky needful to attract his interest to his breakfast. Then he broke the moody silence which had marked him.

"I say, old man," he began, "you made a pretty fair speech to the boys last night. We're holding down more than three hundred thousand acres of land in the Cumberlands. We're in deep, and some of the fellows were getting cold feet until I brought you on to tell them something about our holdings."

Joslin sat looking at him in silence, and he went on presently.

"You see, our money has been in there for twenty years, some of it—that was long before I went into the Company, of course. The holding of raw re-

sources is a waiting game—you cash in stiff after a long wait. That's what we've got to do now.

"But the way to handle this thing is to crowd when the line begins to break. It's time now for us to begin to crowd. We've got to begin to cash in before long, for the interest and taxes have been eating us up long enough.

"Now, we need a good man down in there. The boys have been sending me because they couldn't do any better. You and I between us know about how much I know—we both know that you know a lot more than I do. Now, you've been talking to me a lot of rot about starting a college or a school, or something—I don't remember what all you were saying. Forget it! Cut out all that business about saving your country. Think a little bit about saving yourself. This business of doing a whole lot for other people is all right on paper, but when it comes down to practical life there's nothing in it. A fellow's got to think of *himself*.

"Now, what are you doing for yourself? You're sitting here in my house—not that I want to rub it in by telling you so—in a suit of my clothes and a pair of my shoes. You're wearing my shirt and my socks right now. You haven't got a dollar of your own money in your clothes today. You told me that you had a wife and a grandmother. What are you going to do about them? Any way you look, you're

in a fine position to build a college! Why, hell!

"On the other hand, New York ain't such a slow village, is she? Pretty nice, eh? Something of a party last night, what? Some girls, huh?

"Now, listen. You might do a lot worse than staying right here in New York this fall and winter—you'd be on the pay roll all right. We could make a pretty good thing of it for you if you went in with us and stood by us through thick or thin, right or wrong. We might think of a lot of things we'd like to ask you.

"You've been talking a lot of bally rot about your duty to these people—seeing that we wouldn't rob them in the price we paid for the land or the oil leases. You know mighty well we can go down there and lease a whole farm a hundred years for a dollar. Now, you can crab our whole act—that's easy to see—if you go down there and tell those people they're fools, and that they ought to have two dollars an acre for their oil rights—more'n we've paid them for *all* their coal and their timber and their land any time these last twenty years! You can see easily enough from the class of men I've shown you here last night that we've got all the money we need, all the money that anybody needs to pay for what we want. But we want loyalty. We want service. We want someone to stand with us, thick or thin, right or *wrong*. Do you understand?"

Joslin looked at the puffy face of the man who

spoke, his heavy cheeks, his thickening neck, his watery eyes, somewhat reddened about the rims. He replied slowly.

"Yes, Mr. Haddon, I reckon I do understand," said he.

"Well, well, then, what about it? Do you find New York such a poor place to live in? Isn't there anything here to light you up a little bit more than anything you ever saw down in the Cumberlands?"

Joslin looked at him, his pale face going still paler. "I've seen things here I didn't know was in all the world. But ye wasn't asking me to sell out my own people, was ye?"

"There you go again!" retorted the irritated man across the table from him. "Rot! I've told you the question of right or wrong don't come into business at all. Business is *business*. Highbrow things don't come into it at all. Don't you want to know what life is—don't you want to branch out—don't you want to see what the world has—all the people in it, the *life* of it? Why, man, at first you looked to me as though you weren't a sissy or a simp."

The moisture on Joslin's forehead meant nothing to the man who faced him, who knew nothing of the self-loathing, the self-reproach, that lay in Joslin's heart.

"Well, anyhow, if you lived in this country for a while you might change your point of view," finished

Haddon, pushing back his chair. "What's your hurry, getting out of town? You haven't got a cent to your name, you don't know where you're going, you don't know what to do. I'm sorry for you——"

"Ye needn't be," said David Joslin. "Ye kain't pity a mounting man—he won't have it!"

"Hell's bells!" ejaculated the irate man whom he addressed. "I'm not trying to change any of those damned hill-billies down there. That's not the question. I put it up to you that you're here in New York, and you've got a chance to save up a little money to *buy* your bally old education. You don't have to lose any of your principles. It's just *making good*—that's all there is to it. If you want to make good you're on. If you don't—good-by!"

He rose from the table, irritated, his nerves still a-jangle; but a sort of compunction came to him, or perhaps the feeling that he was making a business mistake in crowding this man. A sudden half-smile came to his face as he turned when the house man brought his hat and stick for him.

"It's a stiff gait we travel here," said he. "Now I'm going to my shop to see if I can earn a dollar or two to pay the rent. I believe I'll turn you over to my chauffeur and let him drive you 'bout town for a day or so. You remember that kid that was there last night—one that sang and played to us—Polly Pendleton, her name was. I saw you having a good

look at that young dame. Some calico, what? Yeh, some girl. Now, listen here—how'd you like to go up and have a little visit with Polly around eleven-thirty or so? I could fix it up. Touch of life, eh? Gad, she seemed to be interested in you somehow—scared or something. Now——"

David Joslin went suddenly white. "Ye fergit, I reckon—I told ye I was a married man. I've got a wife—we had two children, down thar in Kentucky."

"Well, I've got a wife too," rejoined Haddon contemplatively. "If I had any children I'd need that much more of something to make me forget my condition of servitude. I don't know where the Missus has gone to, but she's shook us this morning, that's plain! You go up and talk religion to Polly, while I go down to the office and try to make a dollar and a quarter. Maybe you can save a human soul—eh? That's up to you.

"Life is so short," he went on presently, finding a cigarette in his pocket. "Why hang crêpe when life is so darned short? I don't blame you for wanting to learn the alphabet and the multiplication table, but if a man came to me and gave me a chance like this, I'd postpone those things."

Jimmy Haddon went grimly chuckling to his own desk, and left the question of the gentleman from Kentucky and the lady of Harlem strictly upon the knees of the gods.

CHAPTER XI

POLLY PENDLETON'S VISITOR

THE cynically smiling driver of Haddon's car at a late hour that morning deposited a solitary passenger at the door of a certain apartment building high up on Manhattan Island. Seeing the bewilderment of his charge, the chauffeur himself entered the elevator with him and touched as with no unaccustomed hand a certain button near a door. He then discreetly departed.

The door opened. There appeared almost in the face of the waiting visitor the figure of a young woman—exceedingly comely even at that hour of the day—a young woman of oval face, of dark, long-lashed eyes, of dark curling hair, of shapeliness of figure scantly veiled by the pink kimono which she wore in morning negligée.

It was Polly Pendleton. She was alone. Her praiseworthy partner had before this arisen for her morning cocktail, her morning coffee, her morning cigarette, and her morning stroll downtown.

Joslin stood motionless, silent. In a flash she recognized him. Then he stalked in.

"Well!" said she. "I wasn't expecting anyone this morning." She flushed, half angry. "I don't allow this."

"My name is Joslin—David Joslin," began her visitor. "Ye don't remember me—last night——"

"Oh, yes, I do," said Polly. "Of course I do. You wore the same clothes then you're wearing now."

"They're the only ones I have," said the young man, "an' they're not mine. I don't reckon ye want me to come in?"

"Why, yes," said she, for one half instant hesitant, and closed the door. "Why not, after all?"

He looked about him curiously at the narrow quarters. So, then, this was her home! These were her belongings—the half-emptied glasses on the little buffet, the ashes in a tray, the powder puff, pink-stained, on the dresser-top, the manicure nail pad, the little burnt cork on a hairpin's end.

"Won't you sit down?" began Polly Pendleton, more flustered than she had ever been in all her life. "Will you have a little drink?"

He looked at her in astonishment. "Surely ye ain't meanin' that ye'd take a drink of liquor, Ma'am?" said he.

"Well," said Polly Pendleton, with a *moue,* "once in a long *while*—in case I'm not feeling well, you know! How about yourself? You look rocky."

He looked in grave contemplation at the half-filled

bottle upon the tiny buffet—the glasses which had seen use.

"Ma'am," said he, "sometimes in my country a man takes a drink of liquor. Sometimes a woman smokes a pipe. But I don't think I'll take no drink this mornin'. It ain't my usual custom."

Polly seated herself in a deep-cushioned armchair near the window, her half-consumed cigarette still between her fingers. A pleasing enough picture she presented, as, half leaning forward, she sat staring curiously at this apparition of the morning.

"You're an odd sort!" said she, at length, flinging up a hand nervously. "Well, I've not got down to the pipe yet."

"Say, friend," she went on suddenly, half apologetically, "I was talking to my partner last night. She said that she thought our act rather broke you up. Of course you know it was all joshing—nothing more. That's the way we do at those dinner parties—they sort of expect it of us girls, you know. There's nothing in it, of course. I hope you didn't mind it?"

"No," he said quietly, "I didn't mind. The ways of sin are allurin', Ma'am."

"What's that!" But then she spread out her hands. An awkward silence fell.

The eyes of David Joslin, roaming around the little apartment, spied Polly's violin resting upon the dresser-top.

"Ye play the violin, Ma'am," said he. "Ye're the first womern I ever knew in all my life who could. I reckon ye studied?"

"Years," said she simply. "It cost me a lot of money—and at that they don't like the best things I do. You can play?"—eagerly.

"Only a few of the mounting tunes—ballets such as our folks teached us years ago."

"Ballads? You mean the folk songs?"

"Maybe. I could play 'Barbara Allen.' They tolt me it was Scotch."

"The Scotch have pretty melodies sometimes," said Polly Pendleton judicially. Then she smiled frankly. "You see, I'm half Irish myself—and half French."

"What?" David Joslin sat up suddenly and looked at her straight. "Ma'am, my own granny was half Irish and half French. There wasn't nuvver a womern in all the mountings like her. That maybe accounts fer a heap of things. My granny loves to sing and dance. She's over ninety year old."

The unweighed flattery of his tone was a thing to be valued. She extended to him the instrument and bow.

"Play for me," said she. "Play 'Barbara Allen.' Do something for *me* this morning!"

So David Joslin, student of Calvin, Cumberland mountaineer, self-elected minister—and as he now fully felt, lost soul—thus cast away in a buffet flat

of upper Manhattan, played the old ballad of "Barbara Allen" to one of the gayest young persons at that time in the great city. He played it in minors, bowing very badly, missing the key sometimes a half-note or so, slurring here, over-accentuating there, phrasing after his own quaint mountain fashion, but none the less producing something which might have been called a melody. Polly's foot began to beat upon the floor, her fingers upon the arm of the chair.

"Man!" said she, after he had finished, "if I could take you into vaudeville, we'd break this country! That's *class!*"

"It's not much," said he, misunderstanding. "I nuvver had no lessons. I've nuvver been to school in all my life, an' I nuvver seen a music book in all my life—I reckon that's music ye got over thar?" He nodded towards the sheets which he saw standing in their rack.

"You're an odd chap," said she, with a strange softness in her tone. "I've never seen a man like you—never in all my life. You're a strange chap. What brought you here?"

"I come out, Ma'am, to build a college fer my people. I come out to git my education. I come up here with Mr. Haddon, jest to talk to a few friends of his'n about timber an' oil, ye know."

"Jimmy Haddon, eh?" Polly's lips set rather tight together. "Well, he's a good business man. You

have to hand him that. But say—keep an eye on him, that's all. Listen here, son—you're what we call 'easy' in the city. You don't belong here—you're too straight—you're too good for it."

"What do ye mean?" said he. "Too good! I'm the wustest of sinners. But if I accepted sin—say, if I made a lot of money—several hundred dollars a month—an' had it clear—would ye tell me to throw that over an' go back home?"

The dark eyes of Polly Pendleton looked straight into his face now.

"There's a lot of things a girl can understand without explaining very much," said she, simply. She saw the rising somber flame in this man's eyes that met her own so straight. And then, suddenly, he broke out, all restraints gone.

"Last night ye *touched* me—it was in a joke—ye was makin' me foolish. Ye don't know how foolish ye made me then. Ye took away my brains. Ye got my soul. God!"

"I don't want you to talk that way to me!" flashed Polly, swift tears in her eyes. "No, no—don't—don't! It wasn't right for me to make fun of you—I ought to have known you were different. I came home last night, and I talked about you to my partner. Somehow, I don't know why, you seem like a preacher to me. Besides, once in a while a woman sees something in a real man that gets close to her."

She rose now and spread out her arms, a very beautiful vision of young womanhood, a sort of fair frailness about her after all, in spite of her eager vitality and her overflowing joy in life.

"Why, listen," said she. "I know about men. You needn't make any map to explain anything more to me. You'd be foolish, you'd be crazy; and I'll not have it. I'm not good enough for you. You mustn't stay here. You mustn't be foolish over a girl like me—I'm not worth it. I'm—I'm notgood!" She slurred the last two words hurriedly together. "Get on out of here before you're spoiled."

Her voice trembled. "The city will get you, some time. It's got me. It's got my partner. We're gone. Lost souls! You? Oh, don't, *don't!* You haven't gone the gait that we have. Listen to me now—I think enough of a good square chap not to want to see him go the wrong way. Can't you see that a dancing girl can be a good pal after all? I'm trying to *help* you."

"Easy!" said he, his voice trembling in his own self-scorn. "I had nothin', only what ye taken away from me."

"Take some of this, won't you?" said Polly Pendleton, her doubled hands full of bills which she held out to him, her dark eyes shining. "Here, take it. Do something with it. You wouldn't call that tainted money, would you? . . . It isn't tainted yet. Look!"

But he put back her hands. "No," said he. "My God! No! From ye?"

He hurt her, because she wholly mistook his real meaning. Her face fell, but she shook her head bravely, like a fighter taking a blow in the ring.

"Ye never cared," he added; "ye don't feel—ye don't care." The low notes of his voice rumbled through the little room.

An odd feeling of helplessness seized her all at once. "It's a good thing for you, I don't," said she at length. "Don't I know men are fools enough without making another fool to add to the list? If I cared—good God, if I *cared!* Why, I don't *dare* care for anybody. Now, don't you think you'd better be going?"

She had his hat in her hand, and was replacing the violin and bow.

He rose and stood before her, his hands clenched tight, his eyes still burning, his voice vibrant.

"Ma'am," said he, "I nuvver seen ye but once. Maybe I nuvver will agin. But I'll al-*ways* remember what ye said to me."

"What do you mean?"

"I was hopin' ye'd say it would be a good piece of business fer me to stay here this winter fer a while. I was hopin' I could see ye an' hear ye play some time, now an' then. I was hopin'—I was hopin' what I ortern't to hope. Ma'am, I nuvver seen no womern like ye in all my life. I reckon I nuvver will agin."

"Well," said Polly Pendleton, at length having herself in hand, "you've got none the best of me at that —I've seen a considerable many fools in my time, but you're the human limit, son! The best thing I can do is to tie a can to you and get you started West as soon as possible. You'll spoil over *night*. You ain't strictly human. You're the worst Rube that ever hit this island from any place on earth. Get out now—you're liable to be arrested any minute!

"And yet," she added—still laughing kindly, and all the half-virginal softness of her original nature coming into the wistfulness of her tone—"I'm so glad you came! You're a good sort." She held out her hand. "Listen, friend—when you think of me I hope you'll say I was a good sort too."

He reached out his arms, his hands trembling. "Ma'am," said he, "I'm a married man. I had two children, onct. My father was a preacher. Ye was right, I'm startin' out to be a preacher myself. I was startin' out to do something in the world to hep the rest of them. But if ye hadn't said what ye said jest now to me, I'd be willin' to throw it all away for jest—for jest—for jest——"

How, he knew not, nor she, he caught her arms, soft and white, in the grip of his great hands, and stood looking down at her fiercely, she as helpless as a child in his grasp.

She was struggling to escape him now. "It's not

right!" said she. "I'm alone here—Oh, are you any kind of a man after all?"

At this he dropped her arms, his own falling lax.

"Why, of course I'm a man," said he quietly. "Of course I am. That's all I am. I'm a lost man, a damned one."

"Go!" she whispered to him hoarsely. "I'm not worth that. Go on away, and leave me something decent to remember." She heard the door close softly.

Within half an hour after Joslin had left, Polly Pendleton, unfinished cigarette in hand, turned in her cushioned armchair as she heard the strident call of the telephone.

"Yes?" she replied. "Who is it, please? . . . You, Jimmy? . . . No, don't come up. I'm awfully busy today. . . . I've got to work.

"Who?—the wild man? . . . Keep him? . . . Ask him to stay here this winter? I should say *not!* I told him to get out of town!

"Oh, come now, Jimmy," she went on in rejoinder to what she evidently heard. "There's no use talking that way. . . . Oh, you're sore? Well, I can't help it. I wouldn't have done any different even if you had told me what you wanted. . . . You don't care if I never come back? Oh, very well—same to you, and many of 'em! . . . So long, Jimmy, and when you get decent come up. I may let you in, and then again maybe not."

CHAPTER XII

THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW WAY

WHEN next Haddon and his wife met at the breakfast table Haddon was more than ordinarily out of sorts, his wife rather more than ordinarily grave and silent. At length he flung back from the table.

"Well, don't it beat the devil," said he, "how ungrateful some people are! Here our hill-billy turns up missing this morning. Where do you suppose he is?"

"I fancy he'll find his way back. Perhaps we'll hear from him soon." She spoke quietly, not evincing any of her own uneasiness over Joslin's disappearance.

"You seem to have a very good notion of him and his ways! I'll say he didn't have much politeness about him—just to pull his freight without a word of thanks. He may have left town for all I know."

"He's a strange man in some ways!"

"Well, if he's gone, he's thrown over the best chance he ever had in his life. He didn't have a cent when we picked him up. I think he was a nut, that's what

I think he was, talking about starting a college when he didn't have the price of a pair of shoes to his name. Why, our Company'd build him a half-dozen colleges if he'd come along with us. I just wanted a little more talk with him, and here he's gone, no one knows where."

"I gave him the name of a little school out in the town where I was born—don't you know—Brandon College?"

"Well, Brandon, Ohio, don't happen to be on the map of New York or the Cumberland Land and Mineral Company." He was scowling, his red face puffy, unlovable.

"Good-by," he concluded abruptly. "I've got to get downtown to a meeting—and I've got a hell of a lot of explaining to do. This Kentucky friend of yours has put me in strictly Dutch."

Without further salutation he turned to the hall door. She rose, sighing, and passed out of the room.

At just about the moment that the foregoing conversation was taking place in Haddon's home, another interview was advancing, in the smoking room of a west-bound passenger train heading from the city. Of the speakers one was a grizzled old passenger conductor who had spent his life on the line, who stood now regarding a tall raw-boned young man, whom he had been obliged to accost for a second time,

so much absorbed did he seem in a certain book over which he was poring.

"*Tick*-ets, please!"

"Good mornin'," said the young man, looking up. "I didn't buy any ticket, sir, because I didn't have no money. They let me through the gate in the crowd."

"Well," said the conductor, "you've no business here without one. Where do you want to go?"

"I'm a-goin' to Brandon, Ohio," replied the young man, his fingers now between the pages of his closed book. "I've got thirty-five cents to my name."

"Brandon, Ohio—on thirty-five cents! What do you think we are?"

"I didn't expect ye to carry me all the way to Brandon fer that much," replied David Joslin. "I only wanted to git out into the aidge of town if I could, so I could find work. Please put me down whar thar's a brickyard, an' I kin work my way. I'm a-goin' out thar to study to be a preacher, ye see."

The gray old railway conductor looked at him steadily for a time. There was something so frank in the gray eyes that all he could do was to shake his head. "I'll see you when I've finished making my train," he growled, frowning; but he purposely delayed until after the train was more than two hundred miles west of the city!

"Well, young man," said he then, "I guess you'd better get off about here. My run ends here. This is

quite a manufacturing town, and you can get work in a brickyard, or most any place, I should think. Lord knows, labor's scarce enough so that anyone can find work who really wants to work."

"I thank ye very much, sir," said David Joslin, simply. "Ye've been right kind to me. I believe the Lord will bless ye."

The conductor, abashed, made no reply whatever, but stood looking after him as he slowly strode up the station platform, his gaze this way and that.

The kindly advice of the railroad man proved useful. Before mid-afternoon Joslin had once more engaged in day labor in one of the brickyards of this place, a city devoted to manufacturing interests. He was delighted to find that here his wages would be as much as a dollar and a half a day. The foreman showed him a row of little buildings where, among foreigners of all sorts, it might be possible to get quarters and food sufficient to keep soul and body together. Here, then, in a little room half lighted by flaring gas light, within the sound of profanity and continuous card-playing, David Joslin sat down for his first evening alone in the great world of the Outside.

He began his daily practice of copying the letters of the alphabet, using a piece of brown paper which he had found, and the stub of a broken pencil. Having completed a certain amount of this exercise, he turned to the pages of his book, laboriously to read,

as best he could, the words of old John Calvin, written long ago, about Eve, and the Garden, and the Serpent and the first great Sin.

He read until he slept even as he sat. But as he slept he dreamed and started moaning. He felt on him all the weight of the original Sin.

BOOK II

CHAPTER XIII

THE CLANS

IN the two years that passed after David Joslin left his home, no word was received from him by any of his friends or his kin, even by his old grandam left alone in the hill cabin. Even had he written, few could have read. But no letter came to the little post-office. David Joslin had vanished as though swallowed up by the great Outside. His enemies sneeringly declared him dead or else "run out." His friends had much to do to keep their faith in him, Afterward a report came up from Windsor that he had been seen there. None might know that David Joslin was biding his time.

It was two years before a vague stirring came into the life of the little settlement near which he had lived. Then, upon a certain day of the late summer time, there came winding down the rugged pathways of the Cumberland coves, along the rocky creek bottoms, and at length along the well-beaten trails of the larger streams, little groups of riders. For the most part they were tall and silent men, their eyes watchful as they rode. All of them were armed. In many cases

a woman sat back of her husband on the family mule. It was a gathering of the clans, and it was well known that in case a man were hurt, his own women folks could nurse him better than anyone else. As for that, the women of the mountains were as grim and savage as their lords and masters.

Slowly, steadily, watchful, alert, these strange people of the hills came riding down, the little threads of the broken procession converging toward the Forks where, so went the vague word, there was going to be a sort of meeting for a day or two—for what purpose, few seemed to know. The general understanding was that this meeting was to be held at the old mill building across the river. The village postmaster and the village blacksmith had passed the assembly call impartially.

There was other advice of import tacitly accepted, but, while it was generally understood that there might be, and probably would be, a reckoning between the tribes of the Gannts and the Joslins, those not immediately concerned in the family quarrel treated both parties with politeness. To carry word from one to the other would have been an act of treason, and punishable by the unwritten law of that country. Men went about their daily duties and talked little even to their own families.

The single street of the little village—scarce half a hundred houses and shops in all—was filled now with

groups of men idly strolling, every one of them armed, old and young. Among these were boys, some not older than fifteen years, yet each confident in his own ability to draw quick and hold straight, and longing for the chance. The fingers of many a youth itched to get at the handle of the brand-new gun with which before now he had practiced so faithfully, saving his coppers for "hulls" to feed it. The older men strolled about unagitated. Group passed group upon the street, each man staring into the eyes of his enemy, his own face immobile, over his eye an impenetrable film—the eye of the dangerous man.

Men who casually estimated the respective representation of the Joslins and the Gannts thought there were forty or fifty men on each side. It was doubted if half of these would ever get out of town unhurt. The sheriff was somewhere far to the west, at the county seat. There was no peace officer, nor would it have been a good place for one. It was a meeting of the clans. The Cumberlands were going about their ancient business in their own ancient way.

Some, fitfully interested, spoke of the new railway now advancing from the Middle Fork up Hell-fer-Sartin. There was talk that a pike road had been built in as far as the county seat from somewhere very far in the west, as much as twenty miles. In a general way there seemed to hang in the air an unsettled feeling, as though all knew great events yet

might happen. The war Outside—the railroad now impending—the old feud now about to break a-flame again—it was a grave time for these strange, somber folk.

But a day passed, two days, and nothing broke. The leaders studiously kept away from the young men all that fiery liquor which would be certain to set them beyond control. The tenseness of the long hours began to tell on all. Men became restless—boys stood here and there in groups, talking sullenly, looking this way and that, nodding a head hither or yon. But after their old and usual fashion, the leaders of both factions held them together—old Absalom Gannt and Chan Bullock and their respective attendants. "Wait, fellers," was the arresting word that went around. "Come to the meetin' at the mill."

The main floor of the mill building at the Forks afforded a room perhaps fifty feet in one dimension, low-ceiled and dark. The reticent postmaster and the blacksmith had provided a few flickering lamps. And finally thither, soon after twilight of the appointed day, the mountaineers turned, group by group, man after man, silently, two score Joslins and as many or more of the Gannts, all of them too proud to stay away even though a stern mystery lay ahead. Every man of them was armed, every one of them ready for what might come. The old mill building, the only meeting place tacitly held neutral and the only

practical town hall available, bade fair to see red history this night.

And there was history done that very night. They had all gathered, the men of both clans, thronging the dark interior. For half an hour they had sat, silent and alert, squatting here or there on their heels, slouching on sacks of grain or something of the sort. The Gannts were on the left-hand side, the Joslins on the right, as one entered the door. No one seemed to know what was expected. There still was mystery as to what had brought them here. Perhaps the postmaster and the blacksmith knew. If so, they would tell in time. That word had been passed to the Gannts that the Joslins would be here, and to the Joslins that the Gannts would come, was the only sure thing; and it was quite enough.

The blacksmith and the postmaster passed here and there, setting alight their lamps. No man spoke on either side. Both factions sat looking across the little white-floored lane of No Man's Land which lay between them. A quick motion, a shout, the sound of a shot, would have been fatal to half the men present here; but if any one of them felt agitation, it was not manifest by any word or sign, by any paling of the face or trembling of the hand. Unagitated, calm, they sat, each with his eye on his own selected man, ready for what might happen.

What did happen was this: The door darkened

against the pale starlight. There stepped slowly into the interior, where the shadows lay heavy upon the floor, the figure of a tall man.

It was a man whom they all knew. As he came into the circle lighted by the lamps, a sort of sigh went up, audible in its united volume.

It was David Joslin!

Now they knew why they were to come here. The leader of the Joslins had come back! That meant trouble. He had not died—everybody knew that—everybody had heard from down the river that he had run out and left the country. But now he had got courage to come back!

Yes, it meant trouble. The men on both sides eased off their pistol belts, loosened their holsters, under pretense of settling their coat tails or fumbling for tobacco.

But David Joslin raised his hand at once. "Wait!" said he. So, still silent, still motionless, they sat and looked at him, many in contempt, as many in judgment suspended.

He seemed thinner even than when he had left. His face bore a certain scholarly whiteness visible even under the burning of the sun—Joslin did not tell them so, but the truth was he had walked more than half the way from Brandon College—where for two years he had slaved at learning as no man in all the history of that school had been thought able to slave.

Penniless at his hopeless start, he still was penniless after his overleaping of all rules and schedules and curricula. He had walked to this, his great trial. In some way he had been fed. In his own conviction that had been by direct act of God.

Better clad than when he had left, in a dark suit of clothing which did not fit him ill, with shoes at least not badly broken, and with certain touches of refinements of the civilization outside, none the less he remained the mountain man they had known so well. But something in his voice seemed different. His diction had altered perceptibly, if not consistently. He stood before them now at ease, a leader, a speaker, even an orator of some sort, at least in the possession of that gift of oratory which in simple terms commands the attention of an audience.

"Wait!" said David Joslin. "Don't make any move. I know why you're here as well as you do, maybe a good deal better. I sent word in for you all to come. I've asked you to come here myself—I arranged this meeting with some of my friends here at the Forks. I wanted every moonshiner and feudist in the mountains to be right here to-night, where I could look him in the eye, and he could look me in the eye, and we could have it out together.

"No! I don't mean to have it out in the old way. I want to tell you those times are past. I see you sitting there, Absalom Gannt—I know you're not

a-scared of me, and I'm not a-scared of you. You're fighting men, every one of you. And you've come here to fight each other once more—to kill each other, just like you and I and our fathers have been doing here in these mountains farther back than any of us can remember. You don't know why you do that, but you think you ought to do it. It's a sort of religion with us, just to kill each other. We don't know no better—we never have.

"You thought I was a coward because I didn't tell anyone where I was going. I didn't tell any of my own people. In a way, I just sneaked out of this country, that's true, because I wasn't yet sure about it all. I went down the river. I got to the railroad. I went up North. After a while I got so that I could go to school. That's what taken me out of the mountains.

"Before I left these hills I had resolved to learn how to read and write and to cipher a little bit. I didn't know then how much there was to be learned in the world. I didn't know how hard it was to start—nor how easy once you get started.

"I've been at school less than a quarter of the time any boy of these hills ought to have been there. I've learned more than I thought there was to be learned anywhere. And this is the first thing I've learned—that it's time we mountaineers stopped raising our children for the slaughter.

"I've learned that the only way to stop that sort of thing is by way of schools. You know how my own father died, and he was a preacher. I'm a-going to be a preacher myself some time—I've preached once or twice—they made me, up North there. But I don't want to preach now. I just want to talk to my neighbors.

"Now, I didn't run away. You know I won't flicker. If it's war, I'm here for war—but I don't want it to be war.

"Outside, in the Old World, where our great-grandpaps came from once, maybe, they're having war. It's worse than any of you dream. But they're all fighting for a principle, as they think. We're fighting for nothing down here.

"Now, I want to see peace in the Cumberlands. I'm telling you, I want to start a college right here, on the hill yonder. I'm going to do that some time. Don't you believe me?"

He was looking straight at old Absalom Gannt, and the old man, his eyes fixed steadily upon the speaker, answered him now.

"What law have we got to believe ye? Ye've got no money to start a school. Ye couldn't keep a teacher thar if ye did." Thus old Absalom.

"That's true," replied David Joslin quietly. "That's the Gospel truth! As I stand here now I haven't got two dollars in my pockets. It's plumb taken all the

money I've got to keep the soul alive in my body so I could study hard as I had to. But when I do get through up there, I promise you I'll come here and start a college. Money or no money—help or no help—I'll come and start that college! If I do, will you promise me that between now and that time you'll not start any trouble here?"

The grizzled old man—leader of his people, therefore leader by strength of mind as well as body—sat silent now, looking him straight in the face, and Joslin returned his gaze with equal fearlessness.

"You know I never flickered, Absalom Gannt! You know my people won't run away, not one of them. You know I won't run away. You all know why I left; and now you know why I've come back.

"I've come here to do a mighty work, you'll have to admit that fair. It's a terrible task for all of us. We've got to change the ways we've been living here for more than a hundred years. We've got to break a hole in this wall that shuts us out of the world where we belong, that makes us children and paupers where we ought to be men and citizens. We've got to make our own way out.

"Now, if I agree with you to make you a college, and keep it open—a place where the children of these mountains can come to learn to read and write and cipher, and maybe go higher than that—if I can bring people here from the outside to show you what a big

world it is that you don't know about—tell me, will you promise me to keep the peace ontel I've succeeded or failed—ontel I've made good or ontel I've told you I'm a failure?

"Oh, I haven't got much," he went on hurriedly. "I've had a hard enough time up there—they laughed at me at first—I was ignorant as a child—I was only a savage, a wild man, ignorant as any nigger in the world—and wild—wild. And I was as big a sinner as any in the world—I had a lot of things to forget—me trying to be a preacher. Oh! haven't I sinned! But I thought if I would come down here and get you all together and promise you that if you didn't like what I told you, you could kill me here—it seemed to me it would part way make up for the heap of sinning I've done in my life, young as I am.

"I'm a Joslin. You're Gannts over there—you and your kinpeople. We're fine men, both families of us here. We can kill fifty fine men here in three minutes. Or we can build a school up yonder on the hill, across the river, inside of a couple of years. Which do you want to do?"

He stood silent for a long time, and all he heard was the heavy, half-panting breathing of the men at his right, at his left. There was not the shuffling of a foot, not the movement of a hand on either side. The eyes of each faction were glued upon the faces of the other. A tenser scene could not have been; nor

could aught but starkest courage have evoked and dared it.

There came a movement upon one side of the dimly lighted room. A hundred hands went backward, a hundred pairs of eyes gleamed.

It was old Absalom Gannt who had moved. But his right hand went up above his shoulder, above his head. And it was empty!

He rose slowly now to his full, gnarled height, and stood, his right hand, empty, still above his head.

"Wait, boys!" he said. He turned and looked toward his right. Silently as a cat in his motion, Chan Bullock had also risen. But as he saw Absalom's hand thrown up thus, he himself paused. The two faced one another, each sternly gazing into the face of his foe.

Joslin himself stood motionless, looking from the one to the other, his own hands dropped empty at his sides. He had spoken. But he knew that the fate of the Cumberlands rested here on the decision of these two men.

One false movement on the part of anyone, and the closed space had been a shambles. But Bullock with a quick gesture threw his own right hand above his head. He advanced toward old Absalom, the latter toward him, steadily, grimly, each with boring eyes that never yet had "flickered." Then there was heard a strong and calm voice.

"Fer's I'm concerned," said old Absalom Gannt, "I'm through if ye fellers air."

"Suits me," rejoined Bullock.

And so closed the meeting at the Forks of the Kentucky.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CROSSROADS

IF ever was happy wayfarer, that was David Joslin, as now he held his course back to the little Ohio village which had been his home these past two years. He walked eagerly, hurrying as does a man who realizes that there is much to be done with little time for the doing.

He had no staff nor scrip, nor needed any in the course of his journey out from the Cumberlands to the edge of the great plateau. Here he found the railway leading to the north, and followed its line as any common tramp, for the good reason that he had not money for railway fare. Certain gentry of the road he met, but they neither accepted him as one of the guild, nor hindered him in his going, for they could not classify this man who walked slightly stooped, with pale face, but with long and steady stride, a man whose clothing betokened no luxury, but who still had something about him which did not grade him as one of the hopeless drifters of the world.

At a little town along the road another kindly rail-

way conductor lifted him far along his northern journey, so that presently he was coming to the lower edge of what might have been called the North; for now he approached the great Ohio River and its scattered string of thriving communities. He had eaten only when he found the means to pay for what he ate. Twice he found it necessary to stop in a little town and work for a period of a day or so. Rarely did he sleep in a room. He was still a man of the wilderness.

And he was happy, was David Joslin. For the first time, it seemed to him, the clouds were lifting from his soul. Now, it seemed to him, he had done something to offset his own sin.

Driving his worn body mercilessly, he was footsore and weary when at length he arrived in one of the little towns on the banks of the Ohio River, a junction point where all the north and south railway was crossed by one of the greater systems running east and west, a place of some five or six thousand inhabitants—one of those many communities which have their own pretensions at metropolitanism, each like to a thousand others.

Certain features of these centers of civilization still continued to interest Joslin, a man of such extraordinary lack of opportunity. He stood today, therefore, boylike, reading the lettering on the Strattonville billboards which announced certain attractions in the

theaters and cinema houses for that evening. And he saw something which caused him to flinch as though smitten.

He could not turn away from the great letters which he saw, two feet or more, widely displayed.

POLLY PENDLETON! POLLY PENDLETON!

HER OWN COMPANY

DIRECT FROM HER GREAT BROADWAY SUCCESS

Polly Pendleton! Polly Pendleton! David Joslin knew not how many times the name stood there in print. That a team of vaudeville artists had grown into a certain vogue in the city; that this vogue had become, for one of the performers, a sort of reputation; that a concert singer had grown into being something of an actress, and the actress into some sort of a star heading a company of her own; that this star and her company—whether for reasons of success or lack of success—had left the city to tour "the provinces"—David Joslin knew none of these things. All he knew, or cared to know, or could understand, was that without doubt she was here! She, the *corpus delicti* of his sin!

As the criminal will return to the very place of his crime, so now David Joslin found his feet going where he did not list. There came into his soul a great recklessness. He forgot the occupation of his last two

years, forgot the long road before him. Independence, prodigality, seized him as fully as it might any gilded youth. So, since prodigality also is a wholly relative thing, David Joslin bought him a ticket to the theater that night, repaired to a near-by restaurant, and ate what was to him the most expensive meal of all his life.

No longer the happy wayfarer, but an anxious, downcast and distraught man, on his soul a shadow, he found his way to his seat—his first time in any actual theater. The whirl of it all, the light, the warmth, the color, the music, at first were things rather of torture to him. Where was she?

But presently she came, bowing, smiling, light-footed—it was she, her very self! Yes, these were her eyes, dark and large as ever. Her little mouth, turned up a-corner, was as sweet as ever. Her dark hair curled as it did that other time. Her straight young figure was the same, with all its tender curves. Above all, her frank smile, her compelling air of comradery, were just the same as then, that time, two years ago.

She had the same little habit of balancing up and down on her toes, impatient for the music to give her her cue. Her little chuckling laugh of sheer enjoyment in herself and in life was just the same. She was still the very spirit of life and joy she had been yonder, two years ago—two centuries ago it seemed to

David Joslin! Then he had been another man. And now—he was again that other man!

As to the play, so-called, it was nothing to him, and he knew not how long it endured. The concordance of the strings and brasses meant naught to-night, though otherwise they might have meant much indeed, new as they were to his acquaintance. He sat mute, his eyes fixed steadily upon one figure upon the stage, the sum total of the sensuous appeal lost for him in the charm of its central figure.

And then, electric, a clash in the music touched him to the marrow. The orchestra leader waved his baton. A few violins, a flute or two, struck into the opening bars of an air that David Joslin knew!

Polly Pendleton was at that moment off-stage, but now ran tripping from the wings, smiling, shrugging up her scant shoulder strap as she came. Her violin was under her arm. She waved a hand to quiet the enthusiasm, and played with the orchestra a few staves of the air.

"You're the Only Man for Me"—that was what Polly Pendleton would play, of course. Did not David Joslin know?

When she came to the chorus, she stepped down to the footlights and extended her two round, white arms, bare to the shoulder—her slender, up-curved little fingers reaching almost to the face of the bald-headed leader of the orchestra, himself of a family of eight.

To him she sang, her eyes dark and pleading, her little feet tiptoeing, her voice no less than blandishment itself—"For you are my Baby—you are my Baby—you're the only, only, *only* man for me!" And then Polly Pendleton laughed with her audience at the jest of it.

She ran off-stage, but must come back again, to be sure. This time she raised her hands and her eyes to a solid-looking citizen, who sat in a proscenium box—a banker and a leading figure of the town, it chanced, well known to all in the audience. To him also, pleadingly, bewitchingly, she asserted, "You're the only, only, *only* man for me!"

And so in time Polly Pendleton hitched up her shoulder-strap once more, and ran off in her final exit.

David Joslin found himself, slightly reeling, passing out to the open air with the others. Some men whistled, others bore copies of a song, which they had purchased from the ushers at the door. He never could remember how or why he went to the principal hotel. Certainly it was not to find quarters for himself. Aimlessly he walked down the cross hall of the lobby to another entrance; and so sheer accident favored him.

He knew that the rustle of skirts at the door of the "ladies' parlor" meant the presence of the woman he sought—knew it by some strange super-sense that came to him. A moment later Polly Pendleton herself ap-

peared at the door, looking across the hall to the open door of the café upon the other side.

"All right, Jimmy," she called out to someone beyond, invisible to Joslin. "I'll be in right away. Order me a milk-fed, won't you, and a bottle of pale—with you in just a minute."

She stepped back into the parlor. Without announcement, Joslin followed on in, and so once more found himself face to face with her.

She stepped back, startled, surprised, frightened almost. "Oh!" she exclaimed; and then frowned. "I didn't ask for anyone. Who are you?" she demanded.

Then with a sudden revelation she remembered. Yes, pale and hot-eyed as when she had seen him last; it was the same man, the wild man from the mountains!

She could not quite evade him. "What do you want? How did you get in here?" she gasped.

He did not answer at first, and she herself, not knowing what manner of scene might be expected, resourcefully took him by the sleeve and led him far over to the further corner, where a sofa afforded seats for two. She pushed him down into one end of it, and moved as far as possible into the other.

"You don't remember me?" His voice was broken and hoarse. She nodded.

"Don't talk so loud. They'll hear us."

He seemed unconscious of her warning.

"Why are you here?" he demanded, as though she owed him an explanation.

"Haven't you seen? We're playing here to-night. This one-night business is getting my goat."

David Joslin stared at her. "I know—I saw it all. Sometimes a man's hard to manage." His voice was savage.

"That's the truth!" said Polly Pendleton. "I'm not big enough to throw you out, and I don't like to call the porter, but I've got to have my supper before long. Have you had yours?"

"Yes. It cost me six bits. That's the mostest I ever spent for one meal in all my life."

"Is that so?" said Polly wistfully. "I wish I could get mine down to that scale! Sometimes it's—well, rather more."

"It left me thirty-five cents," said David Joslin, smiling bitterly.

"Huh! That's just about what you had the last time you saw me. Is it the same thirty-five cents you had then?"

Again she laughed, and then rippled out in her irrepressible generosity, her sympathy. "Poor chap!" said she. "Haven't you got ahead any farther than that in two years?" Polly Pendleton could not see any suffering unmoved. She herself had lived.

"It's odd," she said, something of his old story com-

ing back to her. "You must be thirty-five or six, aren't you?—or maybe forty?"

"Not yet quite thirty," said he.

"And you said you were married?"

"I was—once."

"Then what are you doing here? What were you doing there in my apartments in New York? Don't you ever stop to think?"

"I've stopped to think about everything in my life except this. But now all that's done. I'm not going back to school any more." He looked directly at her now.

"Why? What do you mean? Why do you say that? You talk foolish! Why, listen, where do you get this sort of stuff, anyhow? What are you making me out to be? Have I ever asked anything of you, I'd like to know? What do I owe you, or you owe me? I don't get you, neighbor."

"No, I reckon not," said David Joslin, still staring at her steadily from his end of the sofa in the dim light. "I don't reckon you do. I don't reckon a woman like you can understand a man like me."

"Am I so bad, then? God! I wish there wasn't a man in all the world, that's all—I'm sick of them! I've got to make a living, haven't I? Well, it's jolly hard business sometimes to do that. Why, listen—it's only an angel, and a good one, that's kept us on our feet. I'm wearing all my old clothes and hats and things.

And I don't know if I can go back to Broadway again. You don't have all the trouble in the world."

"An angel?" said David Joslin, not in the least understanding her, more than she had him in his last remark, which she thought so slighting to herself. "Yes, I reckon it was an angel brought you to me. I was walking through here, going back to my school, and here I find you! It was as though an angel of heaven had brought us two together. What for?"

"You can search me!" said Polly Pendleton. "I haven't got the answer. All sorts of things happen in this game, of course, but I'm free to say I wasn't looking for you to-night—and to tell the truth"—she rippled out in laughter again—"I don't know what to do with you now I've got you. Won't you please go away? I'm getting pretty hungry, man!"

"Miss Pendleton," said David Joslin, "that's not the way to treat me."

Silence fell between them. Polly Pendleton, hurt and grieved still over the sting of his earlier words—which he had spoken only in condemnation of himself, not her, began to tremble about her lips.

She heard his low, vibrant voice go on. "I couldn't bear to see you reach out your hands to those men there to-night. You touched *me,* once! For sake of that, I'm quitting my school."

"It was only in a song!" she broke out. "I've done that to a thousand men, I expect, and I didn't care a

cent for any one of them. It's in the game—it's part of my way of making a living. I've got to live."

She laughed now with half a sob. "There can't be in all the world any one man for me, I suppose—that's the price we have to pay, who do this sort of thing."

"I don't understand you at all."

"Well, I don't—I won't—there isn't——" replied Polly somewhat incoherently. "Listen, man! You've got to stop this! I can't stand it. This means too much to you. You've taken it all in earnest when there wasn't anything to it but a joke—a game—a business. And besides—I told you——"

"What do you mean that you told me?"

"I told you—that—that I wasn't good! Do you think that's easy for me to say?"

"A woman as beautiful as you could not be anything but good."

"Don't! I can't stand this—I told you once before I couldn't stand it."

"How can I help it? I told you a man is hard to manage."

"You're the hardest to manage I ever saw. What can I do with you? I want to be as good a scout as I can—I don't really want to take money away from blind babies, nor love'n affection from idiot Johnnies. I don't want you at all, and you mustn't want anything to do with me at all. Do you suppose it's easy for me to say that? Why don't I let you make a fool of

yourself the way they all do? Search me—I don't know! Listen—have you ever doped this thing out all the way down the line? What's in your mind—what would you like to do?—what would you like to have me do?"

"I never thought it out. I—I don't know. I don't understand this at all. I don't know why I came here to-night, to see you again."

"Well, let's suppose now that I was a single woman, and you were a single man. It isn't true in your case, and we won't say anything about mine. Suppose we were both free to do as we liked? How far do you suppose, my friend, that thirty-five cents would go in backing a theatrical company like this, that carries thirty-eight performers, its own sets and its own brass?"

Polly Pendleton, dependable always to do the unexpected, was not laughing now, but half sobbing, and wiping her eyes on the corner of her skirt.

"I wish't you wouldn't do that. Please don't!" he exclaimed. "I can't tell you how it hurts me."

"Well, it's you that's done it," she flared at him over the corner of her ruffles, forgetting a half limb exposed. "Did I ask you to come here? Is it the part of a real man to make it harder for a fellow like me, that's trying to get on in the world?"

"I don't reckon I've thought of that," said David Joslin with sudden contrition. "I reckon I was just

thinking of my own self. I know the place in my book that covers that. It's about Adam——"

"Never mind about Adam!" said Polly Pendleton. "Don't I know! If you were just a case of an average Johnnie that had money and no brains, I'd maybe take you on and jolly well separate you. Such things have happened. But here you are with no money and a lot of brains. Excuse me, my friend, but you don't seem to just qualify for running a theatrical company. Besides—I like you a lot. I told you that before. But when I sing, 'You're the only man for me,' that's what I *don't* mean—what I *never* mean. Can't you understand that? I wish you'd never seen me."

"I didn't know there could be a woman like you in all the world—I didn't know what a woman really meant."

"It'd be fine to have a man really believe in you;" half sobbing now. "It'd be mighty fine to listen to that line of talk, even if you couldn't believe in it."

Polly Pendleton shrank back into her corner of the sofa, and wrung her little white hands together; but finally she suddenly turned to him once more, one knee bent, her foot under her, as she faced him on the sofa at last.

"There may be women who could break a man and throw away the pieces for the fun of it. Nix on the vamp for little Polly. Oh, dear! I don't want to talk. I'm tired. What made you come here at all? The

trouble with you is, you don't know what an angel face is. You think I'm the way I look. I'm not!"

Polly was sobbing freely now into the corner of her skirt. "I'm not, I tell you! Don't you know—and I'd rather have told that to anybody in all the world than you—you're so damned honest!"

He made no answer at all, and she went on.

"You've been such a boob that you haven't done anything wrong. You've got your education ahead of you. I'm twenty-six years old, and I know more than you will when you're a hundred and twenty-six. You don't need to have a house fall on you, do you? Come now! I don't"—and here, in spite of all, she laughed through her unwilling tears—"I don't want your little old thirty-five cents at all! Take it and go on, and save the country, friend."

David Joslin sat for a long time. "Sometimes things are hard to figure out," said he at last.

"Yes!" said Polly Pendleton in a low voice. "Don't I know?"

There was no answer save his white-knuckled hands.

After a time she hitched up the other foot on the sofa, and sat, her arms about her knees, staring at him that way, her eyes gleaming in the dim light, impulsive still as a child herself—as indeed she was always to remain.

"Listen!" said she. "I've got an idea. Come now—you seem rather like a priest to me—it didn't seem

wrong for me to tell you things. Will you make a trade, honor bright?"

"If I gave you my word," said David Joslin soberly, "I'd keep it."

"If you'll promise to go on and do what you said you'd do—your education—your college—I'll agree to quit this business in about two months, and when I do I'll go into the Red Cross."

He did not answer her at all. Unconsciously, after how long a time neither of them could have told, they both had arisen. He stood before her, motionless, she herself slightly swaying. Impulsively, she extended her hands towards him in the twilight of the room.

"I know you!" said she. "I know what you want. You want to kiss me, don't you?" She looked at him gravely.

He could not answer. He made no motion. But Polly Pendleton knew now that if any salutation came from this man it would be from a different man than the one who had entered this room a half-hour previous. In short, she knew, whether or not he knew it, that David Joslin was saved.

"Among so many——" began Polly Pendleton, trying to laugh and half sobbing. "Oh, well——"

He never knew how or when he found the street.

Across the hall appeared the red and irate face of a gentleman who, apparently, had long been waiting.

"Where on earth have you been, kid?" he demanded querulously. "Everything's getting cold."

"Oh, have a heart, old dear," said Polly Pendleton, dabbing indefinitely at her countenance with a handkerchief. "I had to powder my nose, didn't I?"

CHAPTER XV

THE ORIGINAL SIN

AS Joslin wandered along a street unknown to him, lighted by flickering arc lights, he was not conscious of the exercise of any of his faculties, but a faint, sweetish smell came to him, a thing familiar in its way. It was the smell of distilled liquors. He looked up, and saw by the sign above the door that here one by the name of John Moran sold aged whiskeys bonded in the wood.

Inside, the room was still light, though now the proprietor was beginning to put away his bottles for the night, it being past midnight. Joslin turned in at the door without any definite purpose in his mind. The proprietor looked at him inquiringly, standing at attention behind the bar. Joslin swayed slightly as he approached, and placed his last two coins upon the counter. The bar man was of the very plausible belief that his customer was already the worse for liquor.

"Sir," said he, "that's all the money I have. I want to rest here to-night if I may. I want to give you the dime, and I want you to let me keep this quarter."

"I'm just closing up," began the man, pushing back his bottles upon the shelf.

Joslin looked at him straight as he replied:

"I know, but I'm alone in this town, and I've no place to lay my head. I'm in trouble. Perhaps you know what trouble means?"

The man looked at him curiously, accustomed as he was to all the vagaries of alcohol.

"Have one on the house," said he at length, and pushed the bottle once more toward his customer.

Joslin picked up the flask with trembling hand, and poured out a full drink into the glass. He raised it to his lips, but did not drink.

"Sir," said he, "I find I do not need to drink."

The proprietor was disposed to be irritable. "On your way, neighbor," said he. "This is a saloon, and we sell liquor here."

Joslin perhaps did not fully understand all that he said. Once more he pushed both the coins back across the bar top. "Please, my friend," said he, "I'm very tired. I come to you as to one who will aid the needy. Let me sit to-night in that chair by the little table yonder. Put the glass on the table by me. In the morning I'll be here if the liquor in the glass has not been tasted—and then I can go on my way, as you say. If the liquor is gone, you will have had pay for it—take this larger coin—but I will not be here then.

"I'd like to sit here and read, that's all," he added

after a while, since the other made no reply. "I have no other place to go."

"Who are you, bo?" asked the saloon-keeper curiously. His education in human nature did not often lead him astray. He knew now this was no ordinary drunk, and no ordinary man. "What's your line?" he asked again.

"I'm a preacher, sir," replied Joslin, "or I was to have been—till to-night."

The barkeeper laughed shortly. "Well, I believe you'd fight fair," said he. And then quickly, "Say, I'll take a chance with you! I'll leave you here to-night. I believe you're up against it. You can drink yourself crazy, or steal all the stock if you like. Or you can do as you say—stay here until I come back in the morning."

Joslin looked at him, still swaying slightly, his hands upon the polished wood, steadying himself.

"To some men I'd say, 'Take a drink and pull together,' but with you I won't," said the proprietor. "Fight it out. It's a man's game, friend. By morning you'll know whether you're going up or down."

"And you'll accept that risk with a stranger?" said Joslin.

"You've got the risk—this night will have bigger chances in it for you than for me! Two or three drinks and I might find you on the floor in the morning. None at all, and I may find you sitting there.

Risk's yours, not mine. If that's the way you want it——

"Well, fly to it, friend," he concluded, chuckling grimly. "Don't ask it again—I don't know what I might do."

"No," said Joslin, "I shall never have another night like this. Let me sit here and read to-night. I will thank you al-*ways*."

"You're a mountain man," said the saloon-keeper suddenly, noticing the accent on the last syllable.

Joslin nodded.

"They're hardy, and sometimes they can keep away from liquor. Well, luck to you."

He pulled down the apron screening the shelves of bottles, and coming around the end of the bar stood for a moment looking at his visitor. Joslin was sitting now at the table, the glass of liquor close at hand.

"If you're going to read," said he, "you'll have to have a light—I'll leave this one burning for you." A moment later he had passed out of his own door, which he left unlocked. Joslin felt for him a strange kinship, so that greater loneliness fell on him when he had left.

The reek of liquor was still in the air, the sawdust itself was redolent of it. But none of this now stirred the blood of David Joslin. Two or three times he raised the half-full glass in front of him level with his eye—and placed it back again untasted on the

table. At last, quietly, pale, he took from his coat pocket a heavy volume, which often he had carried there.

There were certain worn places where the book fell open readily. Familiar words stared up at him.

The solitary reader, trained to literal interpretations, pondered what he read. He endeavored to restore the vision of the Garden, the first home of Man. He undertook to conceive the Temptation, to picture the Serpent himself; indeed, tried to think as John Calvin thought when he wrote his words:

But, since it could not have been a trivial offense, but must have been a detestable crime, that was so severely punished by God, we must consider the nature of Adam's sin, which kindled the dreadful flame of divine wrath against the whole human race.

Augustine properly observes, that pride was the first of all evils. But we may obtain a more complete definition from the nature of the temptation as described by Moses. For as the Woman, by the subtlety of the Serpent, was seduced to discredit the word of God, it is evident that the fall commenced in disobedience. This is also confirmed by Paul, who states that all men were ruined by the disobedience of one.

With propriety, therefore, Bernard teaches that the gate of salvation is opened to us, when in the present day we receive the Gospel with our ears, as death was once admitted at the same doors when they lay open to Satan.

Augustine? Bernard? Who were they? Dust and forgotten for the most part. But after them and before them men had lived, human beings, hoping, aspiring, falling, sinning. David Joslin, mountaineer, turned once more to the pages of the old dogmatist.

This is that hereditary corruption which the fathers called *original sin;* meaning by sin, the depravation of a nature previously good and pure; on which subject they had much contention. Yet this timidity could not prevent Pelagius from arising, who profanely pretended that the sin of Adam only ruined himself, and did not injure his descendants. But the temerity of the Pelagians and Celestians will not appear surprising to him who perceives from the writings of Augustine what a want of modesty they discover in everything else.

Every descendant from the impure source is born infected with the contagion of sin; and even before we behold the light of life, we are in the sight of God defiled and polluted. For "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" The Book of Job tells us, "Not one."

We have heard that the impurity of the parents is so transmitted to the children that all, without a single exception, are polluted as soon as they exist. But we shall not find the origin of this pollution, unless we ascend to the first parent of us all, as to the fountain which sends forth all the streams. Thus it is certain that Adam was not only the progenitor, but as it were the root of mankind, and therefore, that all the race were necessarily vitiated in his corruption. What cavil will the Pelagians raise here?

And then John Calvin went on to tell David Joslin, sitting here in the saloon of John Moran, what sin was:

Wherefore, Augustine, though he frequently calls it the sin of another, the more clearly to indicate its transmission to us by propagation, yet, at the same time, also asserts it properly to belong to every individual. And the apostle himself expressly declares, that "death has therefore passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;" that is, have been involved in original sin, and defiled with its blemishes. And therefore infants themselves, as they bring their condemnation into the world with them, are rendered obnoxious to punishment by their own sinfulness, not by the sinfulness of another. For though they have not yet produced the fruits of their iniquity, yet they have the seed of it within them.

When arguing respecting corrupt nature, Paul not only condemns the inordinate motions of the appetites, but principally insists on the blindness of the mind and the depravity of the heart; and the third chapter of his Epistle to the Romans is nothing but a description of original sin.

We say, therefore, that man is corrupted by a natural depravity. Thus vanishes the foolish and nugatory system of the Manichæans who, having imagined in man a substantial wickedness, presumed to invent for him a new Creator, that they might not appear to assign the cause and origin of evil to a righteous God.

The dour words of the savage old doctrinaire looked up familiarly to David Joslin. More than once alone

he had pondered upon the cavilings of the Pelagians, the deeds of the Manichæans, the Celestians, and others who had fallen under the invectives of this stern leader of the past. Once they had seemed adequate to him. That very day they would have seemed adequate to him. But not tonight.

Two years ago he had closed the pages of his own past. Now he knew that he was closing the book upon yet another stage of his own development. Fellowship, understanding, sympathy, the common human struggles! From John Calvin's interpretation David Joslin turned to an interpretation of his own. He read from larger pages.

The night passed at length. Dawn grayed the dull windows of the saloon front, opaqued that passers-by might not see what went on within. But this dull dawn was the opening of a new horizon to David Joslin. He saw a wider world. He had learned that dogma is not life.

He heard the door open. The owner of the place entered, his usually impassive face curiously turned toward the interior. Joslin walked forward to meet him, on his face now at least the semblance of a smile. John Moran himself smiled, as he looked and saw the untouched glass upon the table.

"Well, friend, you've won," said he. "Here's your quarter back again."

Joslin felt in his hand the weight of a gold piece, but

he put it back, his lip somewhat trembling. "I thank you," said he, "but I can't take it."

"Don't you need it?"

"Yes. But I'll have to finish my own way, I reckon," said David Joslin. "You see, I've been going to school up North here. But now I've concluded not to go there any more. No—I don't need it."

He smiled now, as he extended his hand with that quality upon his face which brought friends to him so quickly, and held them so staunchly.

"Good-by," said he, clasping his brother's hand in his own large one. "I thank you more than I can tell you. I'm better than when I came in here last night. You've been a good Samaritan."

And so David Joslin passed out into a larger world and a wider dawn.

BOOK III

CHAPTER XVI

THE CITY ON THE HILL

IN the Cumberlands, at the Forks of the Kentucky life went on as it had from time immemorial. There were few more houses than there had been a hundred years ago, no more roads, little more of civilization. But one morning, while yet the dawn was young, a man standing contemplatively on the stoop of his house, hands in pockets, looked idly up to the summit of the tall hill, which dominated the little town, and the gaze of this man lingered. There seemed to be someone up there, so far away that he could not be identified.

A certain mild interest arose in the observer's mind. The figure yonder moved about slowly, rising and stooping curiously. Now and again it disappeared behind the crown of the hill. Then it would return, slowly, stooped as though carrying some heavy burden, would drop that burden and start back again.

It was Old Granny Williams who took down the first authentic word regarding the strange work of the man on the hilltop—she had gone up to take him something to eat.

"Hit's Davy!" said she. "He's done come back home! He's a-startin' of his collidge. He war a-layin' the stones in rows, this way and that. He done dug a long sort of trench, like, whar the ground was level, up on top of the hill. He shore air a-goin' to build something."

Some scoffed at all this. Others looked up still more curiously all that day. Word passed that David Joslin had come back home to stay. The next day, at about ten in the morning, as David Joslin dropped in its place a heavy slab of sandstone, which he had carried in his hands from his quarry on the hillside, he looked up to see the cause of a shadow on the ground.

"Good morning, Absalom," said he quietly.

Absalom Gannt said nothing at first, but laid off his coat.

"Damn *me,* Davy!" said he. "Hit hain't nuvver goin' to be said that no Joslin could do more'n a Gannt. Ye a-workin' up here all alone!"

The grizzled old man stood for a time, hands on hips, and looked about him.

"What's that blood on that rock yander?" he asked, pointing to a stain on the slabs at the corner.

"I mashed my hand between a couple of rocks," said David. He held up his hand. The edge of the palm, livid and dark blue, had been bruised off in a large half-open wound, from which the blood still oozed

slowly. "It's nothing," said he. "I swore—before I thought. It'll be all right.

"I haven't any tool except this old piece of crowbar," he went on. "Dan Bagsley, down at the shop, put a edge on this iron. I managed to quarry some rock with it on the face of the hill yonder."

"Well, I'll be damned!" remarked Absalom quietly, and, having so expressed himself, he did not fall to work, but set off down the hill without further comment.

Joslin sat down to rest on the corner stone, which, with his own hands, he had laid. The blood oozing from his hand still further stained the rock, the color spreading slowly as he sat. Under the corner stone lay something else of the life of David Joslin.

He had buried here the old book of John Calvin, outlived of late, since he had found that religion and democracy, and, indeed, hope itself, are naught but human sympathy and human understanding. Between the leaves of the fierce old pragmatist's volume there lay the photograph of a woman—a little picture Joslin himself had bought one day in a shop; the picture of a woman with large eyes, dark, curling hair, a smile upon her lips, as she leaned her face upon her folded hands. Joslin was putting away the past, not regretfully, not longingly, but reverently. The cornerstone was a milestone for him—one of the greatest of his life.

After a time men came, old Absalom Gannt at their head. They spoke little, nor expressed any surprise; nor did Joslin's mountain reticence much relax at first. He only said, quietly, that now he had come home to build his school.

There were teams—two mule teams, a wagon, a plough. Some bore hammers, others spades or axes. More than a dozen strong they were, and as he looked at them Joslin saw among them men of his own kin, and men who but now had been his enemies.

Some now extended the excavation along the line where Joslin already had pegged out the course of his foundation. Others opened more fully the vein of sandstone at the other side of the hill. The wagons carried loads of rock now around the crest. This rock they laid with no great skill, but steadily and soundly, into the rude continuance of the foundation, which presently began to outline itself definitely and surely.

It was to be a building far larger than any of these men had ever seen; but, as one said to the other, Davy had been Outside, so he would know. And David himself, sitting now and again, somewhat wearily, on his bloody cornerstone, looked at this advancement of his labors and was content.

Toward evening of the day when they had finished the foundation, Joslin called his band of workmen together.

"Friends," said he, "we have begun. There will be

no more feuds in these mountains. This is your school as much as mine—I don't deserve the credit for it any more than you-all do."

The steady warmth and trust of their friendship came all about his heart now. After all, they were his people. All they ever had needed was a leader and a chance.

He now dropped naturally and unconsciously more or less into the vernacular that had been his, swiftly as his own diction had changed in his two years of miraculously hard work.

"We hain't been a part of our own state so far," said he, "but we're a-goin' to be. Now we've got to have papers from our state—a charter—afore we kin run our school. We'll call it the Cumberland Institute, I reckon. Here's our application fer it. I want each of you men to sign this paper. We'll be the trustees. Hit's right we should be, because we started this work all by ourselves, with the help of the Lord.

"Absalom," said he, turning to the old leader of the clan of Gannts, "I want ye to sign yore name right here. I've signed it first—I took that liberty. Sign here, Absalom."

The old man stood, his jaws working hard under his dense gray beard. "Davy," said he gently, "ye know I kain't read or write."

"I know it," said Joslin. "I've put yore name down fer ye, Absalom. Make yore mark. That'll stand just

the same. There's fifteen of us here, and we'll all put our names down. We've been plumb forgot, here in the Cumberlands. This will show that we asked our state to accept us and our work.

"You, Chan," said he, nodding to the next man, "come and sign." And Chan came and signed as Absalom had signed—making his mark. And the others followed, each taking in his hand the bit of pencil. Of the fifteen of them only three could write their names. And those names, thus written, stand to-day, in reproach to one of the proudest states in the Union.

As one of the workmen expressed it, "things sort of begun to drift in, like." Material arrived, and men to handle it. Women now brought up meals. So strangely animated did the men become that they grudged the time spent even in their eating, nor did the hours of daylight seem long enough for them. Some found that shavings made an excellent bed for the night. They slept sometimes in the shavings for mattress, with their coats for covering.

Thus in time there arose, gaunt against the skyline, the frame of the first college building in the Cumberlands. A sober, steady, quiet plebiscite went on. The entire population of the village was engaged. Many folk from the country around about came in. None asked questions. The common thing was for a man to arrive, and to lay off his coat. The least was said, and all was mended among these. The work of one strong,

faith-keeping man had been done. There was not a weapon on the hill.

Slowly, with incredible toil, the unskilled hands of these unpaid laborers advanced the task which they had set for themselves. Still the building extended itself against the skyline. About the bottom of the walls now slowly arose the covering of rough-hewn boards, so that it was more apparent what the finished structure would be, if ever it might be finished. The hill folk marveled at the vast size of this building, wondering at Davy Joslin when he told them there were yet larger in the world outside.

Joslin worked steadily with the others, growing gaunter and gaunter as the weeks passed. A faint line of gray had come at his temples, though he yet was young. He had driven body and mind alike without mercy these last years.

None the less, in these surroundings so familiar, among these friends so simple and sincere in their confidence, the soul of the man, so long sad and dour, began to thaw, to show itself beneath the wintry aspect of a nature wholly absorbed in a compelling purpose. To his lips came now more often the light jest, the grim quip, the merry retort, which once had marked him as a younger man. Day by day, not unsettling himself in the new respect in which they held him for his wider experience, he grew into, or fell back into, the old ways of the earlier days.

At times when the work was done for the day and dusk had fallen, they would light a lamp in one of the more sheltered rooms of the unfinished building, and Joslin would read to them for an hour or so, explaining to them what he had read, telling them of the greater world of thought and activity in affairs, which lay beyond their knowledge, and thus proving to them all the better the need of this work in which they were engaged. No Homer of old was ever more a god to his listeners than David Joslin here in the rude structure of his unfinished building.

Again, a yet lighter side of the nature of the mountain man would manifest itself—few, indeed, were more human than himself at heart. With a wide smile, upon occasion, he might call a halt in the labors for a time, and, taking from under a board the new violin, which represented his sole acquisition in the outer world from which he now had exiled himself in turn, he would motion to them to clear a space upon the floor, and fall to dancing for his playing. For the time, the natural fervor of the mountain soul would forget itself in the ancient relaxation of their kind, and men and women, or even children, would follow the measure of his bow. He played with a certain native skill, if with unfinished art, but knowing well the power of music as incentive and as stimulus. These matters now strengthened him in the regard of his fellows, so that he became a leader indeed, not of

one clan, but of many, of all. His word was law to them now. Had he cared to preach, he could, indeed, have stood before them now, and swayed them with his words. But David Joslin did not preach.

It was thus that the city grew, and thus that the feuds passed, no man might say when. There had come from among the people, as always there does come in time of need, a man who had learned and lived, had joyed and sorrowed with them, and who, therefore, was fit to lead them, and to speak with the tongue of law and of prophecy. Alone, Joslin was wide-eyed and sorrowing, as any man must be who carries burdens other than his own. Unconsciously, he was learning the great truth that human sympathy is the only foundation for human leadership.

"Fer a man who kin read the way he kin, four syllerbles and all, Davy hain't stuck up none at all," said old Absalom Gannt. "No, I reckon he's all right. He hain't changed a bit inside."

"He kin play the fiddle yit, too," assented Chan Bullock. "I dunno as old Levi Gaines kin play 'Turkey in the Straw' any better than what Davy does, an' Levi's been allowed to be e'en about the best fiddler in these parts fer nigh on to forty year."

"That's a heap older than Davy is, no matter how he looks," said Absalom. "I re-colleck when he was borned all right, an' he hain't thirty yit. I'll say he's a right servigerous man, young as he is."

"Well," explained Chan Bullock, resting his hands for the time on the top of his mattock handle. "While he may have been a heap like the rest of us one way of speakin', Davy hain't never been profligate. If he had been, I don't reckon he'd of been called."

CHAPTER XVII

THESE TWAIN

ONE day, without explanation to his fellows, Joslin ceased in his labors, and started down the hill. No one asked him his intention, for he rarely spoke of his own plans. They saw his tall figure passing by the road beyond the forks of the river—the direction of his home. A half-hour before dusk that day, he arrived at the little gap in the fence, which made the gate of his own scant acres, unvisited for two years.

He walked steadily up to his own door, and, without announcement, pushed it open.

Two women stared at him without speech, as he stood in the half-light. One of these was his wife, the other his grandmother—the latter had come in upon one of her not infrequent visits, for in the Cumberlands kinship is held a sacred thing, and the ravens of the Lord have never forgotten their ancient errand.

Old Granny Joslin was the first to speak. "Well, Davy?" said she, as though she had been expecting him.

He did not answer her, did not bend in token of greeting to the other woman who sat sullenly silent. He took his own place at the fireside—the chief's place of counsel in a cabin home. It once had been his own fireside. He was a stranger here to-day.

He stared silently at the ashes after the fashion of the mountaineers, who mostly do so because they have few thoughts. But David Joslin had many thoughts now, riotous thoughts, that left his mind a scene of combat.

This squalid interior, the unmade bed, the grimy pillow coverings, the table littered with the dishes of the earlier meal, the entire lack of neatness, cleanliness and order that left the place a hovel, and not a home —all this was as when he had left the place. There arose for him the comparison of this with the sweet quiet of other homes.

He had the feeling that gaunt fingers were reaching out to claim him once more. These who sat here —they were flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone. They were his people. He was of them. What, then, was his duty? And why could he not set out of his mind the comparison that urged in upon him—of these with others whom he had seen in a wider and lovelier world than this? These were ignorant as once he had been —caught in the shallows of life, victims of dwarfing poverty all their days.

Of these two was one whom David Joslin had sworn

to love, honor and cherish, cleaving to none other. He had lived after the fashion of his people. Corn bread and hog meat; pot hooks and the early bed for the woman, crops and the occasional "frolic" for the man —that was the life all of them had known. This might have been any home; this woman, any wife of these hills. But other pictures rose before him—before David Joslin, a man with a conscience and a will to do the right.

Joslin shifted in his chair, but there was no greeting in his gaze. He did not reach out his hand to touch that of his wife—indeed, he never would have done that in the presence of another, for that would have been in violation of the creed of the hills.

"Well, Meliss'," said he at last, "I've come back."

"I see ye hev," said she. "Hit's nigh about time ye did."

"That may be. At least I'm here."

"We heerd tell of ye, Davy," said his grandmother. "We heerd tell all about what's happened. I don't reckon folks'll laugh at ye no more. How far along is the big house by now, Davy?"

"The walls are up, Granny," said he. "It looks right fine, up on top of the hill. We're out of nails now—I've got to go down the river before long to see if I can get trusted for a keg of nails at Windsor." The corners of his mouth suggested a grim smile.

"Ye'd better see if ye kain't git trusted fer a sack

of meal," sneered his wife. "How ye suppose we-all was a-goin' to live here? Hit's two year sence ye left."

"I didn't suppose, Meliss'," said he. "If I had supposed anything at all I'd have stayed right here. When a thing has got to be done, you can't look at what lies between you and it."

"Ye're a fine preacher o' the Gospel," said she contemptuously.

"I'm not a preacher of the Gospel," replied David Joslin quietly.

"How come ye hain't, Davy?" demanded his granddam. "I done tolt everybody ye was called. How come ye hain't a preacher? If ye was, that explains a heap of things. Preachers, they hain't held responserble."

"It's not yet time, Granny," said Joslin gently. "Some time, maybe. I don't know."

"Not time! When's it a-goin' to be time then? When yore pap beginned to preach, he jest up an' beginned, that's all, an' he was helt as powerful a preacher as ary in these mountings. Don't I mind how over on the Buffalo he preached fer two weeks without a showin' o' grace, an' he kep' right on, an' come evenin' of the fourteenth day things begun fer to break, an' within the next two days he baptized over two hundred souls, tell he taken a chill an' liken enough to die from it, excusin' the quinine I gin him."

"Yes," said Joslin, "I know about that. But if I don't preach there, someone else will."

"Well, what then?" demanded the fierce old woman of him. "What's the matter with ye, boy? Hain't ye as good a man as yore daddy, or air ye made all of skim melk?"

He only shook his head, and tried to smile.

"Ye're a-workin' right alongside of them Gannts up thar, they tell me," went on the old dame. "Hit don't look to me like ye had sand enough to hurt a flea. Why hain't ye killed old Absalom long afore this? My Lord, looks to me like ye'd had chancet enough! Did ye come back fer yore pistol?"

"No, Granny, I didn't come back for my pistol."

"If ye don't kill that man I'll do it myself some time!" exclaimed the old woman savagely. "I hain't a-skeered to do it, if ye air. An' look at Chan Bullock—he's all the leader the Joslins has got now, sence ye turned tail an' run out. He's a-workin' now, too, along with the Gannts—well, maybe he's only waitin' to git a good chancet. Maybe he'll git old Absalom yit some time."

"I don't think he will," said David Joslin quietly. "They've slept side by side for more than one night, and neither made a move. Neither of them had a gun—there's not a pistol in the whole lot."

"Well, couldn't Chan taken a hammer and mashed him while he was asleep?" demanded the old woman.

"What better chancet will he ever hev than he's got right now? Did them people ever give us ary chancet, I'd like to know?"

"No; nor did we them until now, Granny. But that day's gone by."

"Don't ye be too damn sure," reiterated the fiery old dame. "They'll git ye yit, ef ye don't watch out."

"If they do," said Joslin, "I'm ready to go. I tell you, times have changed in these hills."

"Huh!" began his wife again. "Ye're takin' a heap on yoreself, seems to me, Davy Joslin. I reckon ye think ye done all this—in two year!"

"No, I don't think so, Meliss'. I think the Lord did it."

"And yet ye hain't set up fer preachin' yit! How'd ye come through school, anyhow? I'll bet ye're pore as Job's turkey right now."

"I'm worse than that, Meliss'. I've got nothing."

"That's it! That's right!" went on his wife heatedly. "Hit's what I expected. Ye'd let us starve. Well, I'll fix ye anyhow."

"What do you mean, Meliss'?" asked David Joslin curiously. Under his words now, gentle as they were, was the fierceness of the mountaineer, jealous of any liberties taken with him.

"Well," she said, "ye quit me. Ye done left me fer full two year."

"No, I didn't, Meliss'. I didn't quit you for two

years. I told you when I left it was for all my life."

"Yes, an' that throwed her on my hands," growled Granny Joslin. "Still, I wouldn't complain if it hadn't been them Gannts stole eight or ten hawgs offen us last year."

"Hit was a fine way to do," went on his wife, with growing confidence in her own powers now. "I nuvver seed a man in these mountings run away from his wife that way, lessen he was obleeged to lay out er git free from the law fer a while."

"I didn't leave the country," replied David Joslin. "I left you. That don't mean that I've left any of my responsibilities. I told you I didn't dare look at the things I ought to do—it was only a question of the thing I ought to do the most. I had to get my education first. Now I've come back. I want to see now what I'd best to do about you."

"Fine time to begin plannin' now!" rejoined his wife sullenly.

"It's true," said he, "I can't do much. I've got mighty little to do with. Still, I want to pay my debts."

She rose and stood before him, close to his chair, her hands clenched into fists, her eyes flashing.

"Dang ye!" said she, with all the fury of the woman scorned in her face. "Ye quit me yellow, that's what ye did. Ye run away an' left me—ye was a coward—ye was a-skeered to stay in here—an' now ye want to

come sneakin' around, tryin' to make peace with them Gannts that we fit with all our lives, the hull of our fam'ly agin the hull of theirn! Ye come a-crawlin' in here atter dark, an' talkin' to me about plans! Ye say the Lord has been a-holpin' ye. I don't reckon the Lord had much to do with it. I reckon ye could tell a-plenty different story right now if ye wanted to."

"Yes," said David Joslin, his forehead wet now, "I could."

"Ye act to me like a houn'," said she. "If ye'd been ary part of a man ye wouldn't of runned away an' lef' me."

"David, I reckon ye got to call that kind of talk," said the old woman quietly.

"Yes, Granny," said he, "I reckon I must." But yet he sat silent, while his wife, now lashed into a fury, reviled him in such words as need not be repeated. Granny Joslin sat and chuckled ghoulishly, her pipe between her toothless lips.

"Well, go on, Meliss'," said she. "Ye're a-gettin' ready for a trouncin', 'pears to me. Hain't no Joslin'll take that."

But presently her grim face turned to the man who sat there silent, staring into the ashes of the fire.

"What's the matter with ye, boy?" said she. "*Air* ye quittin'? Tell me—have ye been actin' up with ary other womern Outside? If ye hain't, it's time ye tuk an' taken a hand now in yore own house."

"Granny," said David Joslin suddenly, his face white in his resolution for a "true confession and not a false defense," "there are three women in my life. Meliss' here is one. There were two others—Outside. If you'd mean that I've gone wrong—for always—with either, or any other woman in the world, that's not true. I came here to tell you the truth. What I've done you know—as much as you're big enough to know or understand, Meliss'. Now, what do you mean? You say you've fixed me—what do you mean?"

"As though I was a-goin' to keep on standin' it!" half screamed his wife. "I tell ye I'm through with ye as much as ye air with me. That new doctor filled yore mind with notions about our bein' married. Well, all right!"

"Yes, he did. It was wrong that we ever should have been married. But I've ended that as far as I could. I studied over it for a long time. What's right for me to do? Whatever it is, I want to do it."

"I didn't need to study so much fer my own part," retorted she. "Thar's lawyers as well as doctors comin' in this way nowadays. Well, I'm a-goin' to git me a *di*vorce, that's what *I'm* a-goin' to do. I done sole the red hawg to pay the lawyer, and he done tolt me what to do."

"Ye heerd her, Davy," said Granny Joslin, nodding her head. "I've knowed it. I was a-hopin' ye'd give

her a good thrashin', though, afore she tolt ye—hit would of been more manful if ye had. But it's true. She's a-goin' to git a *di*vorce—the fust time that word has ever been heerd in our fam'ly."

"Nor in mine neither," rejoined the younger woman. "We was always fitten to be married ontel the railroads come in here—with their new doctors an' their new lawyers. I've been mocked here in these mountings because my man left me, an' because I didn't have no fam'ly. Well, I said I fixed it. I've got out the papers."

"But there was no law against cousins marrying in this state," said Joslin. "It was only a natural law we broke—that's the pity of it all, and the awful part of it all."

"If thar was law agin hit thar'd be a heap of marriages ontied in these mountings," said Granny Joslin.

"Hit don't need to be that," expounded Meliss'. "The lawyer done tolt me, if a man done lef' his wife fer two year 'thouten no support, she could git a *di*vorce from him. Well, ye lef' me two year ago—ye jest been a-hintin' at something of yore goin's on fer two year. Live with ye?—Not if ye was the last man on airth! I'm done—I'm a-goin' to be free."

"You've different ideas from what I had," said David Joslin, still quietly. "I only thought it wasn't right for us to live together. I wasn't thinking of shirking any duty, or breaking any promise, least of

all my marriage promise. I was going to pay you all I owed—all I could in every way."

"Ye kain't pay me nothin' an' nohow!" stormed his wife. "I don't need ye noways on airth!"

"I've got mighty little in the world," went on Joslin whitely after a time. "I'll deed you the farm here. I never asked you to do what you've done—divorce is a thing unknown in our family or in these hills. But one thing's sure—not for any reason—not even if the first reason was taken away—could I go on living with you now."

Trembling in her rage at this, the first actual slight he had put upon her, his wife rose and half ran from the room, deeds, speech and even tears denied her. Joslin made no motion to restrain her, nor did the old dame, chuckling over her pipe, even follow her with her eyes.

"It's done, Granny," said Joslin bitterly after a time. "She can do what she likes about marrying again—I'll not raise a hand to help her or stop her. What I have is hers, all of it, and that's all I can do. As for me, I've not got a dollar, and I never will have while I live, I suppose."

"Thar!" exulted the old woman. "I fotched it! I knowed it—I knowed thar was a other womern—but *two!* Tell me all about it, Davy. Furriners, huh? Well, I must say, Davy, that's more *like*—that's more like ye had some sort of a *man*-sperrit left to ye!"

Her shrill laughter now filled the room, and swayed her gnarled form as she rocked to and fro, her pipe involuntarily falling from her mouth in her merriment. "Tell me about 'em."

"One was a married woman," said David Joslin, speaking freely before his grandmother as he could not have done before his wife. "I didn't know how fine and steady and sweet a woman could be till I saw her. I never heard her say a word above her voice. She was fine, always. I reckon she gave me my start—she showed what there was to hope and work for in the world. And she was beautiful, too—in a way I can't well describe. She was so quiet, so still, folks never would think she was much, maybe not even beautiful. She's one worth more than the world's estimate. There are such—the finest of all in all the world, in all its days. She's married."

"Go on, Davy," chuckled the old dame. "Tell the rest—tell about the *other* furrin womern. Ye said thar was *two* on 'em. That's some sperrit, boy! I declar, I'm a-thinkin' more of ye now than I done hafe a hour ago! While ye're confessin', come on through an' tell me the hull story. Was this-un old or young—was she married or single?"

"Single," said David Joslin, still staring into the fire; "and young."

"What manner of gal was *she?* Was she purty?"

"I didn't think any woman ever could be so beau-

tiful, in one way," said Joslin soberly and truthfully. He raised his eyes now and looked fair into the face of his granddam.

The old woman shrilled with laughter as she saw the pallor of his cheek—the laughter of the old at the ways of life gone by. "Go on, Davy!" said she. "What sort of lookin' gal was *she?* Tell me now—was she big or little—dark or fair?"

"She would just about go under my arm if I stood up," said David Joslin slowly. "She was dark—her hair and eyes both dark. She told me she was French and Irish—she came from Boston, so she said."

"French and Irish—oh, my God!" exclaimed the old dame. "Same as *myself!* Law sakes, Meliss'," she shrilled through the half-open door beyond—"could you a-blame him? Didn't I know his daddy, an' don't I know him? Don't I know *ary* man, come to that——

"Well, Davy," she added at last, "when air ye a-goin' to leave us and go on back Outside? I reckon *that's* the one ye're a-goin' back to, huh?"

"I'll never see her again, Granny," said David Joslin quietly. "But—now you ask me why I'm not a preacher—that's why."

Silence fell now in the little cabin, so agonized was he. The old woman nodded her head slowly.

"I'm going away now, Granny," he continued at last. "I've hurt Meliss' mightily, and I'm sorry. I

sinned, and I was to blame for it, not she, and I know that clear enough—she didn't know any better. I've made nothing but trouble all my life, for myself most of all. Sometimes it's hard to stand."

"That's right, Davy," said his old granddam, nodding. "Yore way is a-goin' to be right hard, I kin see that. Ye got a heap of troubles, one thing with another."

"Well," said he after a time. "It's no use my hanging around. I'm going back."

"Goin' back!" shrilled the old dame, in her toothless mirthfulness. "We'll look fer ye some day—but ye go on back now to that other womern. French-Irish!—she'll be givin' ye the slip if ye don't watch out!"

"I'm not going back to her," said David Joslin. "I told you that was done. I'm not coming back here, either."

"Huh!" commented his wrinkled ancestress. "Here ye was with *three* wimmern on yore hands afore ye was thirty year old—Meliss' an' them two others! Well, I've heerd tell of mounting boys that has went Outside an' made their fortunes an' come back.—Ye been right busy, one way of speakin'.

Her grandson only stared at her, mute.

"As fer Meliss'," she added maliciously, "the Lord has gave an' the law has took away. I don't put it a-past her to marry agin—the lawyer man tolt her she

could if she liked an' could find ary man'd take her. She's powerful homely now."

Granny Joslin filled her pipe and went on smoking and chuckling. She stared so steadily into the ashes of the fireplace, was so deeply engaged with her own self-communings, that she scarcely noticed her grandson as he pushed back his chair, arising.

"Good-by, Davy," said she, as he reached the threshold.

He turned from her and once more closed the door. It was his door no more.

"Meliss'," said the old woman when at length she heard no more his feet passing on the hard ground walk. "Come on back in. He's done gone."

"What did I say!" broke out the younger woman as she clumped in once more. She flung herself into a chair, her face distorted with her jealous anger. "I knowed it—I knowed it all along. I knowed he'd be a-carryin' on with wimmern-folks outside—he done owned up to two—ye heerd him, didn't ye? Us a-starvin' here, an' him livin' soft with them rich! Well, I fixed him, an' I'm glad of it—he had it a-comin' to him, that's one thing shore."

"Well," said Granny Joslin after a time, "hit don't look to me like thar was much hope; that's right."

"Hope!" half screamed the other, unrestrained. "I don't want no hope. If he quits me, I reckon I've quit him. I hain't so old, come to that. I kin raise my

fam'ly yit, somewhars else. Thar's other men in the world besides him—an' real men at that."

"What do you mean, Meliss'?" said the old woman, quietly. "You've said that twict now. I know the Joslins. He hain't nuvver comin' back agin—not in all his hull life. He's done. He'll have enough trouble—but he'll nuvver trouble ye agin. He's *gone*."

"All right, then," retorted the other angrily. "Let him go. He's been gone fer two year, an' he mought as well have been gone fer another year afore that. What do I need with him, with all the other men thar is in the world?"

"Huh!" rejoined the old lady, "as though I didn't know ye'd been a-carryin' on a civil courtship already! Seen him lately, Meliss'? 'Pears to me like ye git worse favored every year, Meliss'. Ye're a powerful homely womern, like I done tolt Davy now." She still chuckled savagely, fearless as ever.

"Go on home!" cried the irate woman who faced her. "I hate ye all, ye Andy Joslins. Who air ye, anyways, to put on sech airs with me?"

But Granny Joslin did not go home for yet a while. Instead, she lighted her pipe with a coal once more, pushing it down with a horny forefinger.

"To *dance* through life, Meliss'," said she, after a time, apropos of nothing apparent,—"that's what life is fer. Ye set mopin' and dawncey all the time—sour as a last month's cornpone—do ye expect a man's

a-goin' to love ye fer that? Yore old one didn't, an' yore new one won't. But me—I kin dance yit!"

And suiting the action to the word, the old dame did arise, and catching her scant skirts up in either hand, executed a sturdy jig after the fashion of the olden times, stamping out the time on the puncheon floor, with an occasional exclamation of her own, whirling and turning, and now and then extending her skirts, at last snapping her fingers as she ceased. She seemed not too weary nor out of breath as she sank again into her chair.

"My God, Meliss'," she said, "I'm glad thar's one Joslin that's showed hisself a man!"

She spoke to a vacant room—the other and younger woman, gone fey of her own savage humors, once more had flung from the room and was standing, hands clenched, in the yard beyond. But old Granny Joslin was not perturbed. She lighted her pipe once more and sat for a time engaged in her own thoughts as before—her eyes fixed exactly on a certain knot of a certain log in the rude wall—she voiced her own conclusions to herself.

"I was about that height my own self when I was a gal. An' Lord! hain't it sweet—to come just inside the arm of a strong man, Meliss'? Don't I know?

"I was a-wonderin' fer a while which one of them two wimmern Davy'd turn up with fustest. But, sakes! I know—he tolt me plenty, if he didn't Meliss'.

French-Irish—dark and curly-haired—big eyes, like enough—she come right under his arm when he stood up—the sort that's sort of squushy when you hug 'em—maybe light on her feet—laughin', maybe! Wimmern that laughs has always got the aidge on them that cries. Why, I kin see that womern dancin' as she goes along, alive clar down to her toes—that's the one—you hear me now!"

And having demolished all argument on the part of the listening knot, Granny Joslin at length did knock the last ashes from her pipe, and, rising, leave the empty house and cold hearthfire of what was no longer a home.

CHAPTER XVIII

MARCIA HADDON

DAVID JOSLIN wished nothing so much as to be quite alone. He did not rejoin his companions on the hill. Pleading his errand at Windsor, he set out at once down stream with no companion other than his own bitter thoughts. It seemed to him he never had known a longer or more terrible day, nor had the future ever appeared to him so hopeless and foredoomed.

It was yet daylight when he arrived at the little town, and he turned once more to the boarding house of the Widow Dunham. As he reached the gate he caught the fragrance of a cigar whose aroma was unusual in these parts. Unwilling to meet strangers, he halted an instant; but finding no way out of it, he advanced, an odd sort of conviction suddenly in his mind. Sitting there, almost as they had sat two years ago, he saw two figures, both familiar to him.

"Well, well," growled the raucous voice of James Haddon as he turned. "What, what? We meet again! How's this happen, stranger? Where you been all the while?"

Joslin shook the hand of each simply, without a word.

Haddon was heavier, redder, yet more coarsened by his manner of life, than when he last had seen him. The flesh hung puffily on his cheeks, drooped from his folded neck above his collar. His prominent eyes were yet more prominent and bulging.

As for his wife, it seemed more than ever as though she did not belong with him, as though she degraded herself by sitting even thus close to him.

"We didn't expect to see you here, Mr. Joslin," said Marcia Haddon—"nor anywhere else," with a faint smile.

"I always planned one day to explain to you, Ma'am," said Joslin. "I didn't want you to think me ungrateful. I may have seemed so."

Marcia Haddon's quick senses caught the increased dignity about the man. She noted also, keenly, womanlike, the new shade of sadness on his unsmiling face, and wondered what was the cause.

But Haddon himself had no interest in these matters. "Well," he growled, "I'm not going to say I was tickled to death at the way you treated us. You double-crossed me—you threw me down, that's all."

"Mr. Haddon," said David Joslin quietly. "I did not double-cross you. I never did that in my life to anyone. You can't call that to me."

"Well, you didn't go along," rejoined Haddon

testily. "I hate above all things the man that won't go along with the bunch. It knocks to pieces any sort of business—big men go in front and plan things, and some little fellow comes along and knocks it all out. I've got no patience with that sort of thing."

Joslin's pale face suddenly went white.

"I've not a dollar in my pocket now, Mr. Haddon," said he at last. "I didn't have when I was in your country. I didn't know the ways of your country—I was ignorant. But you don't know the ways of my country, and you're ignorant, or you'd not speak that way to me."

"Don't bring it all up again, Jim," interposed Marcia Haddon quickly, and raised an arm of intervention, although Joslin had not moved. She tried to catch her husband's eye, for she herself knew it was not far to trouble now. "Why, Mr. Joslin," she went on, "we were just talking of you and wishing we had someone to take us in. We're here just as we were two years ago; and, as you say, we're ignorant. We don't know this country any better now than we did then. You say you're not ungrateful—won't you let us be grateful too?"

"He knows what I want now," interrupted her husband testily. "It's time I knew something absolute and sure about my company's investments in there. Well, are you going to take me in this time, young fellow?" he demanded brusquely of Joslin. "Let me

tell you, I'm not going to turn back again. Are you going to try to square it now a little by helping the man that helped you?"

"If it's any help to Mrs. Haddon to have me go in with you, I'll be glad," said Joslin directly. "She has been very good to me. I'm going back up river tomorrow as far as the Forks.

"But I've got to be going now," he added, and so turned away to the street gate, so shaken with white anger that he scarce cared where he went.

Haddon, mumbling, rose and went into the house, leaving his wife alone. Not long later she heard a giggle, a protest, a chuckle of low laughter. James Haddon had chucked the comely Widow Dunham under the chin, had cast an arm across her somewhat ample shoulders.

"Who was that talkin' outside?" queried the widow.

"Oh, that? It was that long-legged chambermaid you had working here last year—Jucklin—Joslin—— What's his name? Never mind him—won't I do? At least I used to."

The widow replied in such fashion as was obvious. Their joint murmured, low-laughing conversation became unescapable for the single auditor on the gallery. At length Marcia Haddon rose. Something came upon her on the instant, some swift, unappointed revolt, an unspeakable disgust with the married bondage she had so long borne unwillingly. She could not speak with

her husband—quietly she passed the two and went into her own room.

He followed her, after a time, and there she turned upon him suddenly, her cheeks burning in two red spots.

"Jim, I can't stand this sort of thing any longer. I can't—I can't—and I will not!"

He stood suddenly crestfallen at this sudden revolt of one long thought so passive. She went on hurriedly.

"It's gone too far. If it's not one woman, it's another. It's in your blood now—you've been at this sort of thing so long you can't stop. I've been ashamed for years. How can I help knowing?"

"If I did, who's to blame?" he rejoined surlily. "A woman as cold as you——"

"Yes, that's true now, that's true! But why should you care? Only, I'll not go on this way any farther."

Hands in pockets, he only turned away, growling.

"Oh, yes, back home," she went on, her hands at the sides of her temples, "I seemed to be able to stand it. But here—things seem plainer, some way."

His sneer had the sullen anger of a man who knows the indefensibility of his position. "That long-legged lout has taught you to cheek me too. Damn him!"

"Jim," said she, "I don't like to hear such things of you. It's not worthy of the man you used to be.

When we get back to the city we'll have to get on some other way. I'll go on through with you now, because I know your business interests are in real danger. I won't say anything now. But that's all. I'm done. This is good-by for you and me."

Dumfounded, Haddon left her and went out again into the darkness. He sat moodily, his cigar hanging from his flabby lips. Mutiny such as this he had never suspected as a possible thing from a woman like his wife. There came to him, sternly facing him now, two influences—new in his life of bluffing and jollying and pretending and evading and deceiving—the indomitableness of a real man and the immutability of a real woman.

CHAPTER XIX

THE NARROWS

BY morning, Haddon had become a trace more possible in his comportment. He did not need to speak to Joslin further about the joining of forces up the river, for the latter had his own supplies at the landing early, ready for the embarkation, and had arranged to send down for his own boat at a later time. They set about their journey in Haddon's boat, as being more commodious and faster. It did fairly well, the out-board motor chugging along around bend after bend of the ancient river, awakening echoes whose like had never before that time been known in these hills where oar and paddle and sweep had served immemorially.

At noon they ate their luncheon on a shaded bank—not too happy a company, for Haddon was strangely silent, his wife not less so, and Joslin himself, always taciturn, found no reason for speech. As they reembarked Haddon did make some inquiry as to the length and character of the remaining way.

"By and by, in four or five miles," answered Joslin civilly, "we'll come to the foot of the Narrows. I

reckon we'll have to drag the boat up through the Narrows. Between here and there we'll have trouble —the water shoals out in a good many places."

This last was fair prophecy, as they were to find. It never occurred to Haddon that he could go overboard and help in the progress of the boat when it grounded. Joslin stepped out as he was, took the painter of the boat across his shoulder, and, bent forward like any beast of burden, waded on, dragging the heavy craft behind him. Marcia Haddon sat watching all this, looking from the one man to the other. The patience of the poor man, the carelessness of the rich man—these things indeed came to her soul in the nature of a comparison. At length Haddon had the bad taste and bad judgment to complain querulously about the slowness of their progress.

"Damn it, man, is that as fast as you can go?" he exclaimed, perhaps having in mind earlier experiences with half-breed guides in tourist countries.

Joslin made no immediate reply, but stood rigid for a time, very pale. At length, the painter of the boat still in his hand, he waded back alongside the boat and looked the other man in the face, his own eyes glowing.

"Mr. Haddon," said he, "get out here in the water. If we both pull on the line, we can get this lady up there a good deal faster."

And Haddon, being wise, got out, accoutered as he

was. Joslin, somber, taciturn, did not speak to him at all for a half-hour or more.

At length they came, with an hour or so yet of daylight, to the foot of the great pool which lay below the Narrows.

"Here's where we'll have to be careful," said Joslin now, as rounding the bend they caught the full roar of the waters which had assailed their ears for so long. Before them lay a deep black pool with a high ridge of white running down the middle. Above the pool a transverse bar of white entirely crossed the river, here pinched down between two rock walls. The stream plunged across a broken reef, dropping some feet in a wide cascade. On either side were flat ledges of rock now exposed above the water. Obviously, it was the intention of Joslin to walk alongside and drag up the boat close to the shore.

"How far is it on from here?" demanded Haddon, sullenly. "It's one hell of a looking spot, ain't it, you've brought us to—black already as though it was night! I never did like water anyway."

"There's a short cut across the hills from here to town—only a few miles," Joslin answered quietly. "We can make good time once we get above here."

"It's a mighty bad-looking place," grumbled Haddon. "I don't like the looks of it at all. How are you ever going to get up through there?"

"It's easy," said Joslin. "I've been through a thou-

sand times, I reckon. I'll take care of you, so don't be afraid. Now, when I run alongside the ledge yonder, Mrs. Haddon, you climb on out the best you can."

She did so quickly and lightly. Haddon clumsily scrambled out on his knees, red of face, still grumbling, irritable.

They stood now on a flat ledge of the sandstone which made a fair footway, broken here and there with steps as one eroded stratum after another dropped down. The river itself had cut through the entire ledge in the course of ages, and made a plunge, as has been stated, of many feet. From their new place of vantage they could see the full height of what the mountaineers called the "king breaker" of the Narrows—a white crest of up-flung water which rolled back toward the foot of the cascade before it was caught in the downward pull of the current. The roar of the water was now full in their ears. The spot was gloomy, oppressive.

"I wish it wasn't so dark!" said Marcia Haddon, huddling her arms to her. She scarce had spoken for an hour before. "It's growing colder, too."

"We'll not be long, Ma'am," said Joslin. "Don't be afraid at all. Just walk on up, and I'll get the boat up a little way."

"Wait a minute," said Haddon. "It's late, but I just want to try to make a picture here—I want to show the boys what sort of a place this is that they've

sent me to—I've left my camera on the boat seat. I'll have a try at it anyhow."

As Joslin now paused, bracing back on the painter of the heavy skiff, it was caught by a strong side current where the stream was flung back from its impact against the rocky bank—a current which ran out, headed almost mid-stream, toward the main break of the big wave. The boat, held thus strongly, had no great bearing on the water at its bow, but Haddon, unaccustomed to such matters, forgot that, or did not know it. Before Joslin could stop him he was clumsily bending over as though to climb once more into the boat, tugging at the gunwale to pull it closer to him.

It was then, in some way—no one could tell how—that his foot stumbled and caught at a ledge of the rock. He pitched forward into the unstable portion of the boat, stumbled, and, as the wash of the water came in-board, went over, still under the impetus of his fall, and sank, directly into the outflung current. It all had happened in an instant, nor could mortal man have prevented it.

Marcia Haddon for just half a moment saw the upturned face of her husband as it disappeared, a face on which horror was written—unspeakable and unforgettable horror. The next instant he was gone—he was under.

"Quick!" called Joslin sharply to Marcia Haddon,

and cast her the rope. "Make it fast over something."

But he did not stop to see whether or not her weak strength would serve to hold the boat. He was kicking off his shoes, throwing off his coat, even as he spoke, his eyes fixed on the water, as he made ready for a leap few men would have dared.

A hat floated, far below. But nothing else showed —neither here in the eddy, nor yonder in the side current, nor in the great pool below. Haddon had gone deep in his fall, he might have been carried out somewhere midstream, but why did he not show on the surface somewhere in all this time?

All the time he called back over his shoulder reassuringly to Marcia Haddon, but he could not see what she was doing—only he waited, eyes outward, straining, to find some object on the waters—some object now so fatally long delayed. But nothing showed. At length, hesitating no longer, he did what no man ever had been known to do before. He dived straight out for the foot of the up-flung crest of the Narrows of the Kentucky—straight down under the roll of the "king breaker" itself.

Joslin before now had seen a log roll about here for hours in the clutch of the back-turned wave, tossing up and down until at length some freak of the current set it free. He fancied that perhaps Haddon might be caught in something of the same way. It

was one chance in ten thousand for him now, one in hundreds for the man who was giving him that chance. Would he win?

A myriad of blue-white bubbles made a veil across the current down in below, and he saw this vaguely, although the sun was so low that the water was lighted but ill at this hour. The yeast of the water did not hold him up well—he sunk deeper, still deeper, he knew not how far down. Blindly his arms reached out, feeling every way. They touched nothing—the thin, oxygenated fluid hardly could be felt at all. He rose, swam on across the stream, on, out, indeed, he knew not where. He rose just beyond the foot of the main chute, having been down longer than he dreamed a man might stay and live.

But when he found himself still able to swim and still able to see, when he had flung the water from his eyes, he still saw nothing near him, nothing on the black pool. He was alone. He could hear the cries of a woman. He could not go back. It was all he could do to reach the further shore.

He landed well toward the foot of the pool, with difficulty pulling himself out upon the ledge there. But as he turned once more, nothing but the black and the white water met his gaze. James Haddon was gone. Where?

He dared not now look across to the woman whom he saw wringing her hands. He ran to the head of

the pool, toward the flat rock where lay some charred embers of many earlier fires. Eagerly, intently, he looked out and down upon the water for some sign of what he sought.

There was some sort of sign! Deep below the surface, it seemed to him he saw some long dark object, floating, swinging, rising and falling, but not going down on the current. It hung as though held. Was it some log? Joslin knew it could not be.

Drawing his breath in deep and full, he sprang again far out, feeling with his arms, with his feet, but at first touching nothing. Suddenly, just inside the ridge of white water, there came up against his body from below a heavy blow, as from some object flung upward by a giant hand.

It was the body of James Haddon, swaying there. It was swaying strangely, for some unknown reason. It was James Haddon's free hand had smitten Joslin in the face as though contemptuous of him even now.

But Joslin caught at the hand, tugged at it. The body would not give—it swayed in the current, but it still was held!

Joslin knew now what it meant. Slowly, gasping, he turned once more to his side of the river, and once more climbed out upon the ledge. He was growing weaker, but there was yet much to be done. He dared not look across the river now. In truth, Marcia Haddon's face most of the time was buried in her

hands—only she raised it once in a while to see what new terror was here for her.

She saw this strange man, apparently insane, on the farther side of the river, once more pull himself up on the ledge, once more run up to the head of the pool, once more stand there, at the edge, hesitating.

But Joslin was hesitating only to summon up his powers once more. When he dived this time, the open blade of his pocket knife was in his teeth. He swam out again, and she saw him working part of the time above, part of the time below the water, the dark outline of his own body now and again flung out, visible above the course of the white water which ridged down into the dark pool.

At last she saw his head turn. He followed something, apparently, down through the fast water, down into the black, down to the foot of the pool. She guessed what it must be.

Joslin had known what held the body of James Haddon fast. Carried deep down outward by the side current, Haddon had felt something floating down there, had caught at it—a thing no larger than the straw at which a drowning man will clutch. It was no larger than a straw—the thick cord of a fisherman's heavy set-line, armed with hooks depending on short lines—two score hooks or more, each of them a man-trap in such waters. As he had grasped at this line the current had carried him on down. The first

hook had impaled him, passing entirely through the palm of his hand. He swung without any possibility of escape. Below him somewhere two or more heavy catfish were tugging at the line, themselves impaled without hope of escape.

All these things had caused what Joslin had seen —the strange swaying of the man's body back and forth there below the surface.

And Joslin knew by the time the body had reached the foot of the pool, by the time he had cut loose the remaining line and dragged the body up on the beach below, that all hope was long since gone for James Haddon.

Weakly now and inefficiently he did what he could to try to revive life in the victim, but the bluish-purple face, the wide-open mouth, the staring eyes, told him well enough the truth.

Joslin rose after a time. The woman was standing there still, her hands at the side of her face, staring. He knew that she must know.

The boat was gone. Joslin looked down the stream. He saw it on his side of the river, by freak of the stream grounded on the bar which made out from the point. He hastened to the boat, waded out, caught it, and with the oars by chance left in the boat made his way upstream to the foot of the pool. With difficulty he got into the bottom of the boat the heavy body of the dead man.

He did not speak at all when at length the boat lay once more along shore on the left-hand bank, below the flat ledge on which Marcia Haddon stood. He caught the painter now around the stump of a gnarled cedar near the edge, and so turned toward her at last, facing the hardest of all this grievous task.

She stepped slowly, horror-smitten, toward the brink, her hands at her temples. Joslin held her by the arm as she looked down into the swaying boat. The face of her husband stared up at her —bluish-white, the thickened lips open, the eyes staring.

"You must go away," said Joslin at last.—"Go over there in the brush and sit down. I'll have to drop the boat down."

He did drop it down to a point where the ledge dipped so that he could make some sort of landing. Slowly, with very much difficulty, he managed to disembark the ghastly cargo. Able to do no more, he literally dragged the body of James Haddon out and let it lie upon the sand at the edge of a thicket. But she had followed him and looked down speechless as she knelt now, her hands still at her face, her head shaking from side to side.

"Jim! Jim!" she whispered. "Oh! Oh!"

"I feel as though it had been my fault," broke out Joslin. "I put out that set-line myself when I came

through yesterday. We fish there for catfish all the time—they run in that deep water out there. He must have got fouled in the line somewhere when he got in. My God!—I feel as though I had killed him myself."

CHAPTER XX

THE COMING OF JAMES HADDON

THE sun was gone, and the shadows were black in the defile. The ancient river went on with its mocking of them, now low and hoarse, now cynically shrieking, as the voice of flowing water will come, altered by the currents of the air.

The two thus alone in the wilderness spoke not at all for some time, and then Joslin could only go on in his own self-reproach.

"It was where we built the fires, Ma'am," he said vaguely, still endeavoring to explain what could not be explained save in the books of the gods. "I've sat there myself more than one night—I studied there, Ma'am, read my lessons, getting ready to teach. I read while I waited for the fish to bite. I set that line my own self. I never knew—oh! it seems as though I had done this with my own hand."

"Don't," she said, gentle and just even now. "I was afraid you both were gone. Please don't talk. I'm afraid—oh, I'm afraid!—and I'm so cold—I'm so very cold."

She was shivering now, Joslin as well. He hur-

ried to his flung coat and found matches this time, came with bits of drift wood, pieces of dry branches. He built a little fire. "You must get warm," said he.

"What shall we do? Oh, what shall we do? This awful place—oh, this awful place!"

"Wait just a little," said David Joslin. "You must get warm."

They cowered at the fire, two small human objects here in the grip of the wilderness, in the hands of fate indeed. It was some time before Joslin raised his head.

"There's someone coming—I hear a wagon on the rocks, Ma'am," said he, starting up. "You stay here —I'll go see—it must be someone on the trail above."

He hurried to the edge of the undergrowth and disappeared. The sound of wheels became apparent to her ears. Soon after they stopped she saw Joslin come again, accompanied by a tall gaunt man his equal in stature, a man who came and stood near by her, looking down in pity.

"Ma'am," said he, "this is mighty bad—mighty bad."

"Help me, Absalom," said David Joslin. "Mrs. Haddon, you go over there. We're going to take him to the wagon."

Marcia Haddon turned away, her face buried in her hands. She did not see David Joslin and Absalom Gannt as they bent and lifted between them the dead

body of the man who but now might have boasted that he held these and the land of these in the hollow of his hand. They held him now, neck and heels, in the hollows of their hands, such being the will of fate. They carried him up the hillside, and they laid him on the top of the rough load of lumber which was to make his resting place for a time. Then they came back after the woman.

"I was down to the mill fer a load," said Absalom to Joslin as they walked. "Hit's a lucky thing. That's his wife? Oh, my Lordy, hain't that hard! Ye say he's the Company man? He was rich——"

"Very rich," said Joslin. "She's a good woman, his wife. We'll have to help her, Absalom. She'll have to stay with us for a while. We'll have to bury him in here, I reckon—he couldn't ever be got out."

"Tell me, how come him to get in thar, anyways?"

"Fell into the boat—and on over—he was trying to get something out of the boat," replied Joslin. "The current carried him down under. You saw his hand—that was where I cut the fish hook out. He was swinging on the set-line when I saw him. I was on the other side then."

"Ye've had a hard time savin' of him, Davy, that's shore enough," rejoined Absalom soberly. "I know what that water is. Well, the Narrers has got one more man. Damn 'em, anyways!"

They spoke no more when they had come to Marcia

Haddon. She felt the hand of each of these tall men, one at each elbow, aiding her to rise, aiding her up the steep slope of the mountain, aiding her to climb up on the load of lumber where lay the long shrouded figure, covered with coats now—all that was left of what had been, or ought to have been, all in the world to her.

Absalom Gannt took up the reins and sat at the front of the load of lumber, his back toward them. Joslin sat at one side of the load, reaching out a hand now and then to steady Marcia Haddon, who sat opposite, swaying weakly against the rude jolting of the vehicle on the rough mountain roads. His hand was light, gentle, quickly withdrawn. The wagon wheels, creaking and groaning, sent their protest now up against the mountain side as they jolted onward. The wagon, tilting and rocking, carried on. Now and again the long shrouded object rolled horribly from one side to the other. On one side it met a hand firm and strong—this sodden body of James Haddon, now gone to his accounting. Upon the other side it met a hand which steadied it gently—the hand of a woman who, all her unhappy life, had never been otherwise than gentle with him.

BOOK IV

CHAPTER XXI

THE FURRIN WOMAN

THE new doctor from the new town on the new railroad came not only once, but many times to call upon Marcia Haddon, seriously ill at Granny Williams' home. A high fever held her by the time she had arrived in the night after that terrible day upon the river. By the next day delirium had its will of her. The kindly inhabitants called it "chills and fever." It was a chilled heart, a fevered mind.

Granny Williams was wholly contemptuous of the new doctor, or of any doctor. It was Joslin who insisted that the old-woman remedies should not be trusted, who sent for the only modern physician thus far known in that portion of the world. The presence of the latter was accepted only grudgingly by Granny Williams, who insisted that camomile and boneset was all the "furrin woman" needed. But the new doctor, himself a voice in the wilderness, was a young man who understood many things.

When after many days his patient had worn out the fever and showed certain signs of convalescence,

she lay a long time with mind apparently a blank, inquiring nothing as to her surroundings, and equally incurious in regard to herself.

"Where is he?" she asked at length, upon one day when Joslin had come to find how she was progressing. She had come, weakly, to look forward to these daily visits, although often she did not speak to him at all.

"We cared for him," answered he. "When you are well enough we'll show you. We sent out a man with a telegram. We have word for you."

She shook her head slowly from side to side. "Poor boy," she said, "poor boy! Well, it's over for him. I wish it were for me." For the time she did not speak further.

But slowly, under inexorable nature's rule, the duty of living came forward to her consciousness, insistent, imperative. Marcia Haddon, little by little, undertook once more to knit the raveled sleeve. The strangeness of her new surroundings proved of itself a benefit. The faces that she saw about her, kindly as they were, were faces as of another world. Those who attended her spoke a language which at first she scarcely understood. For days she lay and looked at them with not even a smile upon her face to thank them, passive, incurious, but after a time observing and questioning.

"She's powerful weak," said old Granny Williams

to a neighbor, shaking her head now and then. "Them furrin women kain't stand nothin'. To look at her ye'd think she was the one that got drownded in the Narrers, not him.

"They say he was moughty rich," she continued. "They say he owned all the land acrosst the river from here, an' him an' his Company owns half of Hell-fer-Sartin, an' most on Newfound. Well, I reckon it won't do him no sight of good right now—nor her neither, onlessen she gets pearter right soon. If she hain't better in a week or so, we'd e'en about as well measure her."

But they did not measure Marcia Haddon for her grave clothes. She began again to take up the affairs of life. She found the sympathy of all these people of a very gentle sort. The secretiveness and the apathy of the Cumberlands, taking life as it came, were extended to the stranger as well. But all her life it had been Marcia Haddon's trait to observe rather than to talk; and for a long time she only observed—and pondered what she saw.

These strange people—how poor they were, how very poor! Their furniture was mostly made by hand —these chairs, their legs stubbed by an age of wear on the puncheon floors, went back a generation or more. She rested in a corded bed, made of walnut in rude mountain workmanship. The table upon which she saw daily meals served was hewn out by a local

carpenter. The spinning wheel whose whirring she heard in another room was, as Granny Williams assured her, made by her own father in an earlier time. "An' she's a good wheel," added the old woman. "I kin run her all day an' she'll never onct throw her band." The little flax wheel with its more strident hum also was an heirloom carefully preserved.

And all these people were so busy, so under the constant necessity of individual, personal labor. The skeining and the hanking of yarns, the winding of bobbins for the looms, the repair of the loom sleighs by the ancient who made a specialty in such matters—all these things spoke of a day entirely foreign to all the experience of Marcia Haddon, who, born into easy circumstances, in another country, never had known real labor.

There was no cook-stove in Granny Williams' house —the old pot-hooks at the fireside, the crane and its pendent hooks, the heavy cast-iron oven, the brass kettles, an infrequent copper vessel of this sort or that —all these went back to another day. The "furrin woman" for the first time in her life saw what was the responsibility of a home, saw first the beauty of personal industry.

Time was coming on now for the hoeing of the corn planted on these steep hillsides. From her window Marcia Haddon could see women working along with the men, children as well. And then Granny

Williams would tell her of her own young wifehood, when with her husband she had started in to clear their farm, and had helped in digging out the stumps and in logging up the felled trees for the burning. She spoke with pride of granddaughters of her own able to do as good a day at the hoe as "ary man."

"I've got a hundred and twenty-two children an' grandchildren," said Granny Williams with much pride, "or else it's two hundred and twenty-six—I don't remember which. I could have tolt it all right a while back, but someone made off with my fam'ly stick—I had it all notched on a stick. Ever' time a grandbaby was borned I cut a notch on that stick, an' I lef' it out at the woodshed. I reckon somebody taken it fer a poker. How many children have ye got, Ma'am?"

"None," said Marcia Haddon.

Granny Williams looked at her with pity, but made no comment, for this thing, to her so deplorable and indeed so disgraceful, was not to be mentioned in reproach.

Humoring the sick woman, she contented herself with showing the many articles about the house which she herself had made with her own hands—counterpanes and quilts, cloth woven on her own hand-loom. There were a few things which she declared must have come "acrosst the mountings"; that is to say, they must have been brought in by her ancestors in the first

migration over the Appalachians. A book or two—strangely enough, an old Latin grammar—remained of these belongings.

"I kain't read in none of 'em," admitted Granny Williams. "Some of my folks mought have been able to onct, but none of us kin read or write.

"Do ye reckon, Ma'am," she added, "that when the railroad comes we'll be able to buy calico an' jeans in the stores? Hit's powerful slow weavin' cloth, though I will say it wears longer'n anything what ye kin buy. . . . How old was ye when ye first begun to spin, Ma'am?"

"I never did," said Marcia Haddon. "I can't even knit."

"Well, 'pears like ye must be powerful triflin'," said Granny Williams candidly, plying her own needles with renewed zeal at the moment.

Marcia Haddon looked at her suddenly. "I believe you're right, Granny!" said she.

"That new railroad," resumed the old lady, presently, "hit's a-goin' to change a power of things in these valleys. I always said that if it actual come in here, I was a-goin' to take one ride on it if it kilt me. Plenty of our folks is a-skeered to go on the railroad keers. Now, thar was Preacher Bonnell—he went Outside, an' he taken a ride on them railroad keers, an' it liken to been the eend on him. He tolt us all about it when he come back.

"Preacher Bonnell was a-ridin' along in the keers with his haid outen the winder, an' he seen a place bigger'n a house, a regular black hole in the side of the hill, an' the engyne an' all them keers a-headin' right straight fer it. He knowed in a minute the Devil had a holt of the engyne, an' that this here was the Bottomless Pit whar he was a-goin' to take all them people. Preacher Bonnell, he up an' give one whoop, an' off he jumped. He rolled down on the bank more'n fifty feet, an' when he come to he looked up, an' thar wasn't nary sign of the engyne or them keers! They had went right inter the Pit, like he had knowed they would. Preacher Bonnell, he said it war a leadin' to him nuvver to go on no more railroad keers. He says something about that every sermon he preaches nowadays. He warns us all agin them keers. I don't see how ye ever had the heart, Ma'am, to ride on them things, weak an' triflin' as ye seem mostly. Fact is, what made ye come in here anyways, Ma'am?"

"It was my husband—you know he was one of the officers of the Company that owns so much land around here. I had met Mr. Joslin before. He went to New York with us two years ago."

"Well, ye'll see a moughty big building up on yon hill, Ma'am," said Granny Williams with pride. "Davy, he's a-buildin' it. Hit sartin is bigger'n arything ye ever seen in New York. Hit's bigger'n ary

church house ever was knowed in these mountings. I reckon it was part of the boarding they had in that load of lumber they brung yore man in on.

"But Davy," she went on, "he's changed a heap, these last two years. Used to be as natteral fer him to swear as to take a drink—an' in buildin' a house swearin' comes natteral to ary man. But thar hain't nary man heerd Davy Joslin say one cuss word sence he come back from the North. All the trouble he's had with his wife, too—— Ye know about his wife?"

"I knew he was married."

"He was, an' he hain't," said Granny Williams. "Well, Meliss', she tuk an' up an' went over to the railroad an' seen the new lawyer that's come in thar, an' last term of co'te she got her a *di*vorce—that's what she done. That was a few weeks ago, while ye was sick."

"Divorce? He didn't tell me——"

"That must of been a right inter*est*in' term of co'te, Ma'am. Thar was only two men kilt, an' this here one *di*vorce—but it's the fust *di*vorce ever knowed in this country. They say he didn't make no furse at all about her leavin' of him. Somebody was a-tellin' me that that leaves her free to marry agin if she wants to, or him either. Nuvver was such a thing knowed in these mountings afore, fur as I can tell—there shorely wasn't nuvver such a thing knowed among my people, nor my dad's people, nor my mammy's neither.

"Of course, they didn't have no children—er only leastways two puny ones, that died. An' ye said ye never had no children at all, Ma'am?"

"No," said Marcia Haddon, her face flushed.

"Well, ye look to me right triflin'," said Granny Williams with calm candor. "Ye kain't knit, ye kain't spin, an' I reckon ye couldn't hoe corn noways. Maybe the Lord knows His business—what could a womern like ye do with children if she had 'em?

"I was merried when I was sixteen year an' eight month old," she ran on. "I had eighteen children that lived, an' three that died. Like I said, I could of tolt ye how many grandchildren I had in all, ef someone hadn't been so keerless with that air countin' stick of mine.

"Air ye goin' to merry agin arter a while maybe?" she added. "Some does." She spoke in a wholly matter-of-fact way.

"You mustn't talk to me about such things, Granny," said Marcia Haddon, a faint flush still on her cheek.

"How comes I mustn't?" rejoined Granny. "Hain't yore man dead?"

"I know you mean it well"—Marcia Haddon reached out a hand to the gnarled hand of the old woman who sat close by. "All my life—it's been so different, that's all."

"Davy tolt us something about them things," said

the old woman gravely. "I'm content to live right here the way we always done—leastways, I will be if I ever git to take jest one ride on them railroad keers."

"Yes, they'll come through here before long," said Marcia Haddon. "I'm not sure I'm glad—usually when a railroad comes into a new country it changes it so much."

"Hit's had changes a-plenty a'ready, seems to me," said Granny. "Thar hain't been a killin' in here fer two year; sence the big meetin' down at the mill house nobody's been ridin' fer nobody else, an' nobody layin' out—the old fam'ly diffikilties seemed to jest come to stop right suddent. An' as fer liquor—why, of course ye know here, Ma'am, everybody makes his own liquor, as much as he wants. An' now ye kain't hardly git a bottle of liquor in lessen four er five hours, an' I declar', ye have to look around a heap to find that! How come that? Well, it was Davy Joslin done that —him an' his school. Like ye, I dunno if I'm glad er not."

"He's a good man," said her listener vaguely.

"Yes, an' odd as Adam's off ox. Kain't nobody explain Davy noways. While ago, couple of year back, he was called to be a preacher. Then he goes Outside fer a couple of year, an' comes back, an'— ye never seen sech a change in no human man in all yer borned life, Ma'am—his clothes is different, he walks different, an' he talks different. Kain't hardly

nobody understand him no more. But he hain't done preached onct! But everybody knows that if Davy says he's a-goin' to run that school, it'll *run,* some time.

"Ye see," she went on, "accordin' to Davy's count, it's the Lord that does things."

"Maybe he's right," said Marcia Haddon slowly. "Which one of us shall say?"

"Well," said Granny Williams after a while, thrusting her needles through her ball of yarn, "Ef I was ye, I wouldn't bother much about nothin' fer a time yit. Ye got plenty of money anyways—yore man was plumb rich, accordin' to all I hear. Like enough he done lef' ye a thousand dollar, Ma'am? Davy's tolt me about how ye an' him lived. But ontel ye git ready to go home, Ma'am, ye're welcome here, jest as welcome as the flowers, an' as long as ye like.

"When ye kin begin to walk around a bit," she concluded, "we'll take ye an' show ye whar we buried yore man. Hit's up in the old buryin' ground on the hill—my folks is buried thar, an' my daddy's folks, years an' years back, an' plenty of others—fifty or maybe a hundred year, fer's I kin tell. Hit's right qu'ite an' purty up thar."

CHAPTER XXII

WHEN GHOSTS ARISE

MARCIA HADDON'S lawyers wrote with greater and greater insistence from New York, asking her return to care for the matters of the estate of James Haddon, but she still shrank from the thought of going back to the old associations. A strange apathy encompassed her, a leaden indifference to life, as though all were ended for her as well as for the unfortunate lying yonder on the hill. She found nothing in life to interest her, to offer her any hope, to excite in her any ambition. "I'm useless, useless!" said she to herself more than once. She held her own life in review now, day after day, feeling herself unworthy and forsaken, herself too merciless a critic of herself.

Joslin she saw frequently. His visits were quiet, unobtrusive, almost apologetic. He was very sad, and always taciturn, but she often looked forward to his coming with something to ask him, something to discuss.

"I feel so worthless here!" she broke out, suddenly, to him one evening, as she sat in her chair, looking out

across the blue hills of the valley below them. "It's time for me to be going home, I suppose—— But I don't think there ever was a woman so worthless in all the world, nor one so much alone. I don't want to go back. Granny Williams——"

He sat silent, looking across the forests as they lay in the twilight.

"Some day," he said slowly, after a time, "will you ride out with me, Mrs. Haddon, into these hills, with one of our women here? I'll show you things, Ma'am, you never thought could exist in all the world.

"Do you know what I've been doing, Ma'am?" he went on. "I mean since I came back here? At night, when I have time, I'm teaching school—I've begun already."

He smiled at her with his wide, pleasant smile. "My first scholar, Ma'am, is old Absalom Gannt. He's the man that killed my father—or made him kill himself. He's the leader of the Gannt faction. There's been war between the Gannts and Joslins long as anybody can remember in these mountains. Well, Absalom was my first scholar!"

She only looked at him quietly. "What made him come?" said she at length.

"You measure your own ignorance of these people by that question," said he. "I've got a night class of twenty people, every one of them over forty-five—men and women both—some women with babies in

their arms. They don't know how to read or write. They're learning their letters, Ma'am—like little children! What's the difference whether we're happy or not? It's no consequence if we've got something to do. Don't you think there's much to be done, here?"

"Children?" said Marcia Haddon vaguely—"Old Granny Williams said——"

"I had two children. I was glad they died. But I'm trying to make ways for other children to grow up fit to live."

She sat for a long time, her hands idly in her lap, her pale face turned steadily out toward the enigma of these hills.

"Spartan!" she exclaimed. "All Spartans! And I had so much! They tell me my husband's estate will be about two million dollars."

David Joslin smiled. "It must be fine," said he, "to know where your next meal's going to come from. I've hardly ever known that."

"Granny Williams said—— You see, I have no children of my own. And here—why, here are hundreds waiting."

He was looking far over the hills.

"Do you suppose," she went on after a time, as he remained silent, "do you suppose if I built another building up on the hill, with a part of this money he made out of this very country—if I built one building for girls, dormitories, you know, or class rooms—big

enough for two or three hundred children—would there be that many?"

He smiled. "Many thousands," he replied. "They'd come from fifty miles around, a hundred miles—everyone begging, like these old people in my night classes, to learn how to read and write. They want *knowledge,* Ma'am! They want up—they want *out!* If you could help in that—I don't think you'd feel 'worthless,' ever again! Whether you ever did that or not, you mustn't ever say that word again. At least, you've given one man, once hopeless, his hope and his chance—and his dreams, we'll say. I've had quite some dreams, you see."

"Fifteen or twenty thousand dollars would go quite a way toward making a building of that sort?"

He smiled.

"There's not been fifty dollars put into our building, I suppose, Ma'am," said he. "Twenty thousand dollars—that's more money than there is in all this county. But there's twenty thousand millions in sight of where we sit."

She turned to him contritely—"It's plain enough what my husband and his Company wanted to do with these people—they wanted to steal away their very birthright, before they were wise enough to know its value. It wouldn't be charity for me—it wouldn't be even a gift. It wouldn't be a fraction of what you have owing to you from me and mine.

"And it might be done too," she went on shrewdly. "With the Johnston and Bulkley and Oddingham holdings, my husband's estate would pretty nearly control the Land Company's affairs—they would vote with me, I'm sure. So maybe, you see"—smiling for almost the first time in all these weeks—"it was in my destiny to come here?"

"It may have been," said David Joslin simply.

She ran on eagerly now. "We'll have a church up there too, some time. Couldn't you be the preacher some time, Mr. Joslin? And of course you'll be president of the college. Listen at me talking! I'm just like a child.

"But you don't answer," she said, looking at him keenly. He was staring out steadily. Gaunt, with sunken eyes and prominent cheekbones, worn and drawn by the long hours of labor bodily and mental, David Joslin was not a handsome man, nor did even physical well-being seem vouchsafed to him now. He was sad, very sad. It seemed to her she had never seen a face so sad as his.

"Of course," she reiterated, "you'll be the president. You'll have to preach—no one else could."

He turned to her and half raised a hand. "You mustn't," said he. "That's my school—yes. But I can't be its president."

"Why? What do you mean, Mr. Joslin?"

"You don't understand. No, I reckon not."

"No." She shook her head. "You start a thing and don't finish it—is that the plan? And this the very thing in all your life which outweighed everything else? And you've got me to thinking it was a wonderful thing that you had planned. You'd drop it now?"

She was resting her chin on her hands, now white and thin, supported on Granny Williams' cane. Now she lifted her head and half turned away. He caught the significance of the act, and it made his gaunt face paler.

"Well," replied he quietly, "now perhaps you can see why I'm not happy."

She looked at him so deeply regretful that he pulled together with a resolve obviously painful.

"You don't know much about me. That's of no importance. But if you are interested in my school and my people, then I do become important in one way. Shall I have to tell you about myself?"

"Go on," said she, nodding. "Yes."

So then, simply, baldly, unsparing of himself, he did go on and tell her about himself and his life—the hopelessness of it, the narrowness, the meagerness, the despair of it all, the tenfold shackles of misery and ignorance which had held him and all his so long. Then he told her of his own marriage; and of the end of it.

"I don't wonder you are unhappy," said she slowly

at last. "But still I don't know why you should not go on with your school as you planned."

"I reckon I'll have to tell you all the rest," said David Joslin desperately after a time. "I didn't think I ever could."

"Why not?" she asked simply.

"You want to know what is my stumbling block? I'll tell you—it was a woman."

"You mean your wife? But I don't think I ought to discuss that." She half rose.

But she could not stop him now as he went on stumblingly, unalterably.

"Oh, no! Not that woman—my wife," said he. "Another."

"You needn't tell me anything more, I think," said she. "Are you going to tell me just some common story about yourself and some woman?"

"That's just precisely what I'm going to do!" said he. "I'm going to kill all the respect for me you've ever had. Then you'll know why I can't be president of my own college. I'll have to go through fire before I can. I'm not good enough. Now then you can see."

"Who was she? When——?"

"You ought to know, certainly. It was your husband——"

She sat up suddenly, her eyes flashing. *"That* woman——!"

"So then you knew her?"

"Why should I not?" rejoined Marcia Haddon, now all aflame. "Did she not ruin my married life, as much of it as there was to ruin? Didn't all the town know about her, and him—and me? Of all the women in the world I ought to hate, that's the one!"

"And of all the men in the world you will hate, I'm the one," said David Joslin. "But I can't lie to you now. My conscience made me a coward for a while, but it's my way to go on through."

"How could you have known that woman? When did you meet?"

"Twice," said David Joslin. "Once was at the dinner of the Company; the next in the morning at her own rooms. That was twice, in New York."

She looked at him, utter scorn upon her face. Her cheeks at last had color.

"Don't be too harsh if you can help it," he began once more, half raising his hand. "Don't suspect too much in some ways. In others you can't suspect enough. You don't understand—— Well, I was a fool. I was tempted. The Evil One followed me right along all the time from the day I left these mountains. He was right at my side every minute, though I didn't know it. I reckon it was *you* that kept him away from me, Ma'am. For me, you have been the power of light. If I had stayed right close to you I'd never had such temptation. The Evil One had his own devices with me—it was—it was the temptation of St.

Anthony, Ma'am. I can't well talk. Can you understand?"

"It's not necessary for me to understand!" said Marcia Haddon in white scorn. "I understand enough already. That woman was my husband's mistress—everyone knew it except you—or did you know it?"

He turned upon her a face now suddenly so horrified in its suffering that even she relented.

"I've—I've been very ignorant, Ma'am," said he. "I've known very little. I—didn't know that. I thought she was very beautiful and good. Oh, not so beautiful as you, not so good—but what could I know about such things? I've never met but three women in my life, you might say. Well, you know the three, and you're one of the three. You see, I didn't know much about women, that's all. Well, what she told me was true."

"But surely you must have known——"

"How could I know? How much experience had I? How far had my education gone? I've met three women in all my life, I said. I've had two years of school. Well, that's all. That's my life. It isn't much. I never knew much of—what you say."

"Often?" asked Marcia Haddon—"How could it have been often that you met her?"

"Twice, Ma'am," said David Joslin. "The last time to say good-by. That was up at Strattonville, not so very long ago. If it hadn't been for that, I

reckon I'd have gone on and finished my college course. I reckon maybe if I hadn't met her then I could have been a preacher some time—I could have been president of this school—I could have had my life's ambition and my hope. You say she ruined your life. Didn't it come to the same thing with me? But I can't call her bad—surely it wasn't her fault in the least. I reckon it was the fault of life. But that was why I came back so soon. And that was why I met you when you came in. And you—you are a woman too. . . . But of another sort, I suppose. Better——"

"Did you know," she said to him after a time, "that the Polly Pendleton Company was backed by my husband's money all along? He was out on the road for weeks at a time—he practically abandoned me. Well, that was my husband!"

"And I've lost every honest dream of all my life because of that same woman," he spoke after a time. "She herself tried to tell me, and I wouldn't believe her. Well, you've made it easier.

"Not that it wasn't over anyhow," he added, with not the slightest trace of self-pride in his words. "Ma'am, let me tell you something—do you see that college house of ours up on the hill? Well, under the cornerstone of that building there are two things, and I put them both there myself. One is my copy of old John Calvin's Institutes, and the other is a picture of Polly Pendleton. That's a right odd combination,

isn't it, to go under the cornerstone of a college? Well, they're both there.

"So now you know. As for me, I've got to finish my education before I'm big enough and good enough to teach or preach up there. It was you—not that woman—made me feel that. It was *you* that taught me how big and grand and sweet the world is, how much there is to learn, how much there is to do. It was *you* who have shown me how far I have to go. I reckon it'll be over hot plowshares, Ma'am. I've got my ordeal yet ahead. May justice and not mercy be mine in my ordeal.

"You've made it easier," he added after a time, "a heap easier. It's only what the girl herself was trying to tell me—but I couldn't believe it. Another man's? No—I don't share a woman with any other man on earth. What's mine is mine. What's his may be his. Let him rest up there on the hill. She's dead, too, I reckon, now. But you see, I didn't know. I'm glad you told me, Ma'am."

"*Don't* call me *'Ma'am'!*" exclaimed Marcia Haddon suddenly. "I hate that word!" Without any explanation, she rose and left him. She had seen the unveiling of a stark human life, and had begun to measure back her own life, her husband's, with this whose story she now had heard. Hot plowshares? Why, yes, if need be. But that was his ordeal, and one that he had earned. Were men indeed all alike?

CHAPTER XXIII

GRANNY WILLIAMS NARRATIONS

DAVID JOSLIN did not come to renew his invitation to Marcia Haddon to ride into the mountains. She saw him no more. Nor did she herself even yet keep her oft-renewed promise to depart at once for the North. Moody and silent, aloof and unhappy, this passed from one resolve to another until one day Granny Williams, by chance, offered a means for carrying out her own self-formed plan of a visit deeper into the hills.

"I sartinly would enj'y it, child, fer to go back in thar a ways with ye," said Granny. "Three or four of my boys lives up in Redbird, an' I hain't been in thar fer a long time. We could ride up in one day an' stay a month, fer as that, if we wanted."

"Aren't you afraid to go?" asked Marcia Haddon, hesitating, knowing that the old lady would never see her eightieth birthday again.

"Afeerd? Why should I be afeerd, womern? I reckon I'll never see the day when I'll be afeerd to ride a mewel that fer an' back, if I want ter." And, indeed, when on the following day they embarked for

their journey, the old dame herself sat carelessly, with one skinny knee across the horn of her man's saddle, thrust almost up into her face as she perched, a bag on one arm and a basket on the other, and smoked her pipe in perfect contentment as she rode.

"Ye like enough don't know much about mewels," said she, "bein' a furrin womern. Mewels is best fer the mountings. They'll just walk along if ye leave 'em be. All ye got to do is to foller right behind me, an' keep yore beast a-walkin' right peart."

The full foliage of the vernal season now covered all the mountains. The stream, idling and loitering, broke into rapids over rock ledges, or swum out into wide, still pools under the far-flung fringes of the elms and beaches. As they rode, Granny Williams told the story of this place or that.

"Over in yander house," she said, nodding her sunbonnet in the direction indicated, "is a woman lives that's got six sons, ary one of 'em over six foot two inch tall. An' not one of 'em nuvver had a father. Old times, folks that lived fer back in couldn't always git a preacher noways. Shouldn't wonder if they got merried some day even yit, now the railroad's come. But sakes! me a-talkin' that way! I reckon I'd better wet my finger an' touch the top of my left air. Ye see, Ma'am, if ye wet yore finger an' rub the top of yore left air, that makes folks bite their tongue when they talk about ye. Didn't ye know that? Ye furrin

wimmern certainly is plumb ignorant, hain't ye?"

"Go on," said Marcia Haddon, chuckling to herself. "Tell me some more, Granny."

"Not much to tell about these mountings, Ma'am—nothin' ever did happen here much. Hit's a settled sort of country. Now, over thar ye see that pile of logs, like? That's whar Old Man Stallings used to hev a barn. He never did git no roof on the barn, nohow, though fer thirty year he was a-plannin' about it. He used to set right thar on that log jest below the ridge, an' look at that barn, an' wish thar was a roof on it. He done that fer thirty year, an' then he died. So that's how come the barn to rot down that way.

"Now, over yander on the creek is whar Preacher Bonnell's pa used to live. He was about the fightin'est preacher we ever did have in here—always used to ride with a Bible an' a pistol an' a bottle of liquor in his saddlebags when he was out a-preachin'. One day he rid twenty mile over the mountings to Newfound jest to shoot a man. The co'te finded him fifty dollars. That's too much to fine a preacher. We all allowed twenty dollars'd been plenty.

"Preacher Bonnell, he used to have a nigger man a-workin' fer him—onliest nigger ever was in these hills, I reckon. We used to have 'em here along atter the war, but one time, come 'lection, when they was a-sellin' their votes fer two dollars each, the folks paid

em off in counterfeit money. That riled the niggers, an' they done left.

"Speakin' of old Preacher Bonnell, Ma'am," she went on reminiscently, "he was a odd sort of man. Onct in a while he'd sort of take spells, like. He didn't speak to his wife fer nigh about five year, one time. He used to shoot at a mark, and drink liquor like all the other men folks. One time he bet eighty-four twists of tobacco, agin a new wagon, that he could beat Tomp Frame shootin' at a mark. Tomp, when Preacher Bonnell wasn't lookin', he cut his bullet in two so he couldn't hit nothin'. That's how come him to kill Tomp later, and git finded fifty dollars. Hit made him so mad he couldn't talk—he jest played deef an' dumb fer a long time. One day he set in a game of keerds, an' luck came his way, an' he said right out, afore he thought, 'High, low, Jack an' game, by God!' Ye see, he wasn't always a preacher. He wasn't called ontel he was nigh about fifty year old, I reckon."

Her auditor turned away her face, so that her own amusement might not be seen, and the old lady rambled on, chewing at her pipe stem as she rode.

"Nothin' nuvver happens in these hills, ye see, Ma'am," said she. "I hear tell, Outside, of picturs that moves jest like they was alive. O' course, that's a lie. But hain't it funny how many things folks thinks up? Now, we nuvver had no sich things as that when

I was young. Fact is, I kain't say as I ever had but jest two kinds of amuse*ment*. One was to hear the preacher tell about hell fire—he painted it up like a lake of red, with yellow around the aidge. Other was a picture a temper'nce preacher had all done in colors, showin' how a drunkard's stomach looked. Hit was red, too, like hell. I kin recollect even now about them things—hell fire an' the drunkard's stomach. We never had no other amuse*ments* but jest them. When Old Man Bonnell got to a-*de*pictin' hell fire, and shakin' folks out over that, time them folks come forewerge!

"Over yander is whar Old Mammy Pierce lives——" pointing to a small cabin by the wayside. "She's a granny womern—we call 'em granny wimmern that he'ps folks when childrens comes, ye know. Her husband was a sort of doctor, too. He didn't give nothin' but *nux vomic* very much. He says *nux vomic* would fotch arything every time. He done killed ummage of the stomach with *nux vomic*, an' even tonsils.

"Now, jest beyant whar Mammy Pierce lives is whar used to be Bill Coates' house—ye kin see whar it burned down. Me an' my man was a-ridin' right along here when the house was a-burnin', an', well, sir! Bill Coates was a-settin' thar watchin' it burn. 'Sakes alive, man!' says I to him, 'why don't ye put it out?' 'Well,' says he, 'I sont my gal hafe a mile up

the creek to git a pail of water, an' she hain't come back yit. That was more'n hafe a hour ago.' 'Pears like the gal stopped to talk with some of the neighbors up thar about how the house was a-burnin' down, an' time she got back it was too late.

"I wish't we had time to ride up to Big Creek, Ma'am. Thar's a fine store up thar—travelin' men comes in thar from the other side, an' sells all sorts of goods thar. They carry their sample things in the saddlebags same as Old Preacher Bonnell used to.

"But ye see, we kain't read an' write in these mountings. The storekeeper, he always has kep' his books with marks, like, on the boards of his cabin. He makes a short mark, like, fer two bits, an' a long one fer four bits, an' he'll have some sort of picture fer each man that he's a-trustin' out goods to. Sometimes he has to make signs fer to show what he's done sold. A few month ago Arch Morrison come in, and they liken to have a diffikilty over his account. The storekeeper said he'd sold Archie a cheese, an' Archie he done denied of it. 'Thar's a pictur of it,' says the storekeeper, an' sure enough, thar was a big, round thing like a cheese. 'Oh,' says Archie, 'that hain't no cheese I bought. That's a grindstone.' 'Shore enough, Archie,' says the storekeeper, 'shore enough. I done fergot to put the hole in it.'

"No, times is right qui'te in here, an' always has been, Ma'am, as ye kin see easy. In the fam'ly fight-

in's thar's a good many killin's, but we hain't had what ye might call a real murder, not in sixty year. Ye see that house acrosst the creek thar?—well, over thar, sixty year ago, a fam'ly named Baker murdered a feller named Pruitt fer some land an' money he had. That Baker woman sartinly was servigerous. Her man hit Pruitt in the haid with a hammer, an' they left him out in the yard, but he come to. The old womern says, 'Well, I'll kill ye so ye'll stay killed.' So she taken up a ax an' cut off his haid. That was a long while ago. Things like that don't happen often. That was murderin', not killin'.

"Fact is, times is gittin' qui'ter even at 'lection and co'te settin's nowadays. Thar wasn't nobody shot over in Leslie County co'te settin's last term, excusin' Mose Post. The depity sher'f, Wilson, went out to 'rest Mose. He was about the fightin'est man in them parts. Mose was a-leanin' aginst the fence when the depity come up, an' his gun got hung in the palin' when he pulled it, so the depity shot him a couple times. Hit hain't much like old time co'te settin's when I was young, Ma'am.

"No, I reckon it's the new railroad that's a-changin' everything nowadays. We're within twenty mile of whar it's a-goin' acrosst the haid of Hell-fer-Sartin. Folks says that farms is a-goin' up right along nowadays, an' timber, too. Land didn't useter have no value here when I was a gal as old as ye air now. Folks jest

moved out an' set down on a piece of land, an' cl'ared it up like—that's the way me an' my man done. I've seed a good farm sold fer a fiddle an' a hog rifle—an' now here's that farm wuth they say maybe twenty-five thousand dollars, 'cause they found a little ile on it. How much is twenty-five thousand dollars, anyway, Ma'am?

"Times sartinly is changin'! Now, in my time I've seed the hull upper part of Tejus Creek—they allowed over two hundred thousand acres—sold fer a rifle an' a bell-crowned hat. What ye reckon that land's wuth now, Ma'am?

"The Joslins had land over in thar, too, someone tolt me. Fer matter of that, Davy like enough owns or will heir from his granny a heap of land over on Hell-fer-Sartin, besides the farm he give to Meliss' over thar on Coal Creek, whar he used to live. He nuvver would sell his land, an' he nuvver would let his granny do it neither. The blacksmith an' the post-master tolt me that like enough when the railroad comes Davy sartinly will be rich. I've knowed coal rights to go fer five cents a acre, an' old-time poplar an' oak timber fer a dollar an' a hafe a acre. Yit folks tells me that one log outen them trees would be wuth ten or twelve dollar down at Windsor, maybe. Ye reckon that's so, Ma'am?

"Oh, shucks, I expect I'm a-makin' ye tired, a-talkin' this way. I'm just a-narratin' along, 'cause

ye said ye wanted to larn somethin' about our mountings. I wish't we had time to git up to Big Creek. Thar's a fam'ly of twelve people up thar, Ma'am, an' every one of 'em plays some kind of a musercal instru*ment*. When all twelve of them people begins to play ye'd think hell was a-poppin', Ma'am. Didn't ye nuvver hear ary one of our old fiddle tunes?"

Marcia shook her head. "I'm afraid not," she said.

"No? Why, Davy useter be a powerful fiddler in his time, afore he got religion so hard. I reckon he could play most all the old-time tunes. Didn't ye nuvver hear 'Barbara Allen,' or 'Lord Lovell,' Ma'am? I've seen men set an' cry over 'Lord Lovell.' Then thar was 'Polly Allen,' another ballet. Thar was some folks always that could make words fer ballets, an' they'd sort of sing 'em.

"As fer fiddlin' tunes, thar's so many I kain't hardly recollect. Thar was 'The Flowers of Edingburg'—I don't know whar that come from, but they says it's old, an' like enough come over the mountings. An' thar was 'The Deer Walk'—I don't know whar that come from neither. Then thar was 'The Hog-Eyed Man,' an' 'Jawbone,' an' 'The Puncheon Floor,' an' 'Jones's Still House,' an' 'Sugar in the Bowl,' an' 'Suds Over the Fence,' an' 'Turkey in the Straw'—didn't ye never hear *none* of them tunes, Ma'am?"

"I'm not sure, Granny," rejoined Marcia Haddon. "As you say, I'm powerful ignorant, and I'm afraid

my education isn't very wide in these matters. Go on and tell me some more."

"Well, thar was 'Round the Sugar Tree'—that's another tune the boys played at dancin's—and 'Notchy on the Hill.' That tune come from the raftsmen. They tolt us thar was a river called the Mississip' somewhars, an' a good many tunes come up from down the Mississip'.

"Then thar was 'Sally Ann,' an' 'Ida Red,' an' 'Shreveport'—like enough 'Shreveport' come from the raftin' times, too. Then thar was 'Dan Hogan's,' an' 'Old Ned,' an' 'Gall of the Yare' (Guadalquivir?). 'Polk an' Dallas' was a 'lection tune. Then thar's 'The Campbells Air Comin',—why, law! Ma'am, I could go on a-tellin' names of fiddlin' tunes fer a hour yit.

"But hain't this a purty country, Ma'am, we're a-goin' through? I think it's right purty, an' I always done so, from the time I was a gal, old as ye air. Davy says he hain't seen no purtier country'n this, an' he's been Outside. I wonder how much land he'll heir from his granny—mother of Preacher Joslin? She's ninety-five year old, if she's a day. Wouldn't it be strange if the new railroad would make some of us pore folks rich atter all? Ye don't know much about Davy?"

Marcia Haddon had turned away her face from the scrutiny of the old woman's keen eyes, but the latter went on:

"I always did wonder what Davy done when he went Outside. Do ye know? He sartinly come back powerful changed. He useter be a right servigerous kind of a man, like I said, the fightin'est of all the fightin' Joslins. But, shucks! he's so different now ye wouldn't know the boy. He's as mild as skim melk. He always was good to Meliss', too. Her gittin' a *di*-vorce from him when he was away—an' all he was a-tryin' to do was to git a education so's to he'p pore folks like me! 'Pears to me like Meliss' Joslin got entirely too much attention paid to herself along of that *di*vorce. She nuvver was so much noways. She couldn't neither spin nor weave wuth shucks, an' besides, her two babies both died on her. She wasn't so much.

"Law, I could tell ye a heap more things if ye liked narratin'. Fer instant, here's whar the men in my grandad's time chased the last two Injuns outen this country, an' kilt 'em up on Redbird. This creek was named atter one. Thar's a hole up the river called Jack's Hole, whar the other was shot. One Injun was named Red Bird, an' the other they called Jack. They cotched 'em up above, but they used to live in a cave round here, not far from whar we air now.

"Wasn't Davy a-tellin' ye about the cave whar the two wanderin' wimmern lives? Well, that's the very place whar them two Injuns useter live years ago. Hain't he never tolt ye about 'em?"

"I don't think so," said Marcia Haddon, content with the one-sided conversation. "What about them, Granny?"

"Well, I'll show ye the very place right soon. Hit's jest beyant the two rocks that leans together, whar Davy says some time he's a-goin' to start another school. Hain't he nuvver tolt ye about that neither? Seems to me ye an' him hain't talked much noways.

"Well, now, them two wimmern is jest pore wild folks, ye mought say. This cave is the onliest home they've had fer years. The young woman is named Min, an' her little gal is named Min, too. She hain't got no pap, but she's purty as a pictur, that little gal."

"The poor child!" said Marcia Haddon. "Granny, I almost wish I hadn't heard so much."

"Well, Ma'am, suppose ye was throwed down in these mountings, with nothin' to do with—what do ye reckon ye'd do? About the best ye could, huh? I reckon that's what all of us folks has had to do—yes, it's jest what all of us folks has had to do. It's what everybody has got to do, come to that.

"Say, child, was ye ever merried more'n onct?" Granny demanded suddenly. "I reckon ye was young when ye was merried—ye hain't larned much yit."

"Yes, I was young," said Marcia Haddon. "And once—only once."

"Uh huh! Man jest come along an' got foolish over yore purty face, like enough, an' talked fine to ye, an'

so ye was merried! It goes that way. Well, I reckon in a year or two ye'll like enough merry again. Ye're gittin' purtier every day. Some folks merries in lessen a year, but hit hain't ordinary helt decent to be in too big a hurry."

She went on, ruminatingly. "Me an' my old man has lived together a long while—I nuvver was merried more'n only onct, neither. He's so damn tough nothin' couldn't kill him, 'pears like. He got a tree fall on him, while ago, when he was turned fifty, an' he hain't been much of a fightin' man sence then, but still he's lived along sever'l year sence then, too.

"Well, now, what I was a-goin' to say was, Ma'am, supposin' if he'd of died when I was, say, young as ye air. Do ye suppose I'd of stayed single all of my life? I don't say if I would or I wouldn't, but I've knowed wimmern to merry four or five times, like enough—I mought of merried sever'l times, come need fer't. But thank God I didn't haveter.

"Didn't ye never have no sweethearts afore ye was merried, Ma'am?" she went on in her own fashion, her inquisitiveness now growing under the reticence of the other.

"Don't all girls?" said Marcia Haddon soberly.

"Most has," said the old dame, "mostly, yes. All, ye mought say, that's as purty as ye was. An' as I was sayin', ye're a-gittin' purtier right along. Ye'll be a right peart-lookin' widder afore long. Well, like

I was sayin', ye mought of merried ary one of 'em if ye hadn't of merried the man ye did."

"It never came up for discussion in my mind, Granny," said Marcia Haddon with dignity.

"Huh! Thar's most always two or three men in ary womern's life," responded Granny Williams calmly. "Thar was two or three in mine. Like enough I'd of merried one of 'em if I hadn't of merried Henry like I done. I been too busy to think about sich matters sence. But, just so long as a woman is foot-loose like, chances air she mought merry two or three men, or even sever'l, like I said."

Marcia Haddon made no response to this matter-of-fact reasoning, but her ancient companion continued in her monologue.

"Yes," she chuckled, "that's so. An' yit, if ever a man admits to his wife that he has ever saw more'n one womern in all his borned life, she'll raise hell with him! Now, Davy——"

Marcia Haddon suddenly pulled up her mule an' hastened on, but relentlessly the old woman resumed when she had come alongside.

"I was sayin' about Davy—he were merried onlucky. It jest happened that way. An' now she's got her a *di*vorce from him. That's a awful thing."

"We'll talk of something else, Granny," said Marcia Haddon. The old dame looked at her keenly, curiosity in her unseen glance.

"An' why not talk of Davy?" she insisted after a time.

"I don't wish to do so, Granny. It's nothing to me how he has married or what he does."

"I reckon that's so," sighed Granny Williams. "He's only a mounting boy at that, though powerful smart. Some said he hadn't orter of ever left the mountings, because he war the leader of his fam'ly—Chan Bullock, he's too young. Well, maybe they're right, an' maybe they hain't. They say the old quarls is about all fixed up in here now—the whole country's changed come these last two year, now the railroad's comin'."

"An' Davy's changed, too," she went on. "He's sadder'n what he used to be. I don't know as I ever seed a man any sadder'n he is, especial right now. In the old times he used to be the fightin'est, whisky-drinkin'est young man in this here hull valley, an' now he's got to be the workin'est man in all these parts. I reckon it's the *di*vorce that shames him. Not that I suppose he's a-seekin' around anywhars for any more merryin'—he like enough had his satisfy of gettin' merried."

Marcia Haddon did her best to change the conversation. "You were telling me about a place where they used to teach school long ago—right out of doors, in the open," said she.

"That's furtherer on up the creek, beyant the old

ford whar the bufferlo come down to the salt lick in my granddad's time. That's a purty place, right in the bank of the creek. I'll show it to ye some day.

"But now," she resumed, as, turning the bend of the road, they saw before them the blackened roof of a deep cavern in the sidehill—"thar's whar them wanderin' wimmern lives I was tellin' ye about, Ma'am. Looks like thar wasn't no one to home."

But presently what appeared to be a little bundle of rags far off at a back corner stirred, moved, and developed itself into a very ragged little girl with very tangled hair. She was perhaps seven or eight years of age—a child with wide, dark eyes and white, even teeth, as now they might see, for she smiled shyly as they paused at the opening of the cave.

"Come here, Min," said old Granny Williams. "Come on out here an' talk to the lady, won't ye?"

The child came out, very slowly, shy as some wild creature. She was clad now in a single-piece nondescript garment, was barefooted, and her hair apparently had never known comb or covering.

"Whar's yore mammy at, Min?" demanded the old lady.

The child made no answer; only stood twisting a toe into the gravel of the roadway, painfully embarrassed by the presence of this strange creature whose like she never had seen in all her life.

"It's only a furrin lady with fotched-on clothes,"

said old Granny Williams. "She won't hurt ye. Kain't ye come an' shake hands?"

"Yes, little girl, come," said Marcia Haddon suddenly, holding out her hand, and leaning forward with so bright a smile that slowly the child came to her, shyly extending her hand.

Marcia Haddon took the child's hand in her own. As she did so a strange emotion suddenly came upon her—a primal glow at this touch of a child's warm hand in her own. Sudden tears came into her own eyes—tears not unhappy, either; for now, in some way unexplainable to herself, a whole, new, wide world seemed to open all around her. In her own world of ease, apart, she never yet had known or dreamed the great, throbbing, vital things of life itself. But these simple folk, poor, forgotten—they knew them all. They were so far richer than herself. Their world had been so much wider than her own.

The child stood looking shyly at her, like any wild creature, her dark eyes wide and wistful, across them passing alternate waves of light and shadow, as left by a passing cloud upon the sky. But, moved though she was to speak to the strange lady, she did not do so. Only she stood looking up wistfully, and the woman who sat above her looked down wistfully in turn.

"Have ye had yore breakfast, Min?" asked Granny Williams brusquely. The child shook her head, her

finger in her mouth now, her toe still twisting at the earth.

"Well, well, hain't that a shame! I reckon yore mammy's at the corn-hoein' up to the big house in the bottoms, hain't she?"

The child nodded her head.

"Well, well, ye shall have somethin' to eat." The old lady opened the top of the small basket which hung on her arm, a basket which it was always her custom to take to church with her for the sake of certain children and grandchildren of her own. She drew out a round cookie with a hole in the center, which she extended to the child of the wandering women—the first sweetmeat the little one had ever known in all her life.

"I'll tell yore mammy to bring ye down somethin' to eat," added Granny Williams. And so she clucked to her mule.

The solitary occupant of the cave stood now in the road, looking after them wonderingly, even the beloved cookie arrested halfway between hand and mouth.

"Granny, what will become of a child like that left here in these hills?" demanded Marcia Haddon after a while. There was a half sob in her voice, though still that strange, new, warm feeling in her heart.

"Why, she'll go to hell, that's what'll become of her," said Granny promptly. "Excusin' of that school of Davy's up thar on the hill, an' what it kin do fer

these childern, why, they're all goin' plumb to hell, accordin' to ary sort of preachin' I ever did hear."

"Yes," she went on reflectively, "thar's a heap of the onredeemed in these mountings, I reckon. Maybe the railroad'll make all the valleys alike—I hope so. It may not come in my time. Davy says it's a-comin' right soon. I don't know about them things."

Marcia Haddon made no answer. She looked across the tree-clad slopes of these rounded hills, trying to visualize the point of view of that man, her husband, who once had felt his own right to so much of this country and its contents. Ownership of these hills, this great world that lay about her undiscovered! Did, then, the rights of sovereignty impose no duties in return?

"Granny," said she suddenly, after they had traveled for a time in silence.

"What is it, child?" asked the old dame gently.

"Do you suppose the mother of that child would let her go away to school?"

"Do I suppose so?" ejaculated Granny Williams fiercely. "Don't I know she would? We been waitin', here in the Cumberlands. Jest waitin'. Lord ha' massy on us.

"Look what Davy done," she went on. "He war only out a couple of year, an' yit he changed complete, ye mought say. I kain't hardly understand him talk no more, he talks so furrin, same's ye. If Davy has went

furrin, 'pears like we all mought as well chirk up some an' git more furrin, too. The new railroad'll sartinly change a heap of things.

"Well, here we air at the gate of my cousin, right on beyant. We'll light down an' stop here overnight," concluded Granny Williams at last, knocking the ashes out of her pipe and thrusting it into her pocket. "Was ye ever to school much in yore life, Ma'am?" she demanded as she stood, her lean arm across her mule's neck.

"Yes, Granny," replied the "furrin woman" gently. "But I've learned more to-day, I think, than in all my life before."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE DRUMS

WHEN, on the afternoon of a later day, Marcia Haddon and her ancient chaperone re-entered the long and straggling street at the forks of the river, they noted certain signs of excitement. A group of men was standing; others were hurrying to the open space in front of the big store.

A striking sound came to their ears—a sound not known in the Cumberlands for a generation—the throbbing of a drum, the shrilling of a fife.

Upon a staff, upheld by the hand of one of a little group of four men in uniform, was something which focussed the eyes of all. It was the Flag—the Flag for which the Cumberlands once had fought.

"Why, look-a-thar!" exclaimed Granny Williams, hurrying up her mule. "I know them boys, all four of 'em! It's Jimmy an' Willy Sanders, Tom Carswell, an' Grief Talley—all four of 'em went out an' 'listed more'n eight year ago, an' been in the Army ever sense. I'd like to know what fer they come in here now."

Marcia Haddon could see posted up in the window a flaming poster whose letters of red spoke loudly

enough to all who could understand them: *"Your country needs you!"*

Their country! Their country! It had forgotten them all these years—these men who once had saved the principle of freedom for a world—a world now gone mad once more with blood and crying aloud now again for aid in the salvation of that same principle.

"What is it, Ma'am?" demanded Granny Williams, as they hurried on down the street. "What's the paper say?"

"It's the war! They must be a recruiting party from the Army," said Marcia Haddon. "The paper in the window says, *'Your country needs you!'*"

"It 'pears to me I heerd some talk about thar bein' fightin' goin' on Outside somewhar's," said Granny Williams. "But what's that got to do with us down here? Ye don't reckon the Govern*ment* needs us, do ye?"

That was the message of this flaring placard hung up for these, so few of whom could read; that was the import of archaic drum and fife, and modern flag and uniform—here in the far-off and forgotten Cumberlands. *"Your country needs you!"*

Men came from all parts of the little settlement, attracted by the sound of the music. They gazed dumbly and vaguely at the sheet in the window, whose meaning they knew from what these soldier boys told them —a recruiting sergeant, a corporal, and two privates,

sent in from the district recruiting station on the railroad, far away.

"Whar's Davy?" asked old Absalom Gannt. "Someone go git Davy. We got to look into this thing."

Before David Joslin could be found, the two women had turned in at Granny Williams' home. Huddling like fowls, all the women had taken to cover at the alarm. The street was empty save for men and boys.

"What's all this about, Davy?" asked old Absalom, when presently Joslin joined them in the street. "Is our Govern*ment* in this here?"

"Yes," said David Joslin. "It's war! Our country's in it. That's what it says."

Someone handed him a newspaper, and he read its headlines hurriedly, interpreting for them as he did so. These men well enough knew what war was, or had been—the traditions of their fathers told them. The faces about him were serious now; no light remark was ventured by any. Their eyes shifted from the gaunt, lean face of David Joslin, as he read, to this little fluttering emblem which stood driven in the mountain airs.

"They've fired on our *Flag!*" said David Joslin to them at last. "Our women and our children have been killed by these—the enemy."

A low murmur, amounting to a growl in sum, rose from the group of men. Silently they gathered more closely about him.

"Shot at our *flag?*" said old Absalom Gannt—"an' wimmern and children—that kain't be! That hain't *right.*"

"But it's true," said David Joslin. "We'll have to fight."

"Ye're damn right we'll have to fight!" said Absalom. "Our Govern*ment* kain't stand *that.*"

"The sergeant here will tell you," went on David Joslin, after a time. "The Government wants volunteers, up to forty—that'll let me in. It may be some of you boys will want to go along. Maybe it's our time come at last!"

And now, all at once, swiftly, exultantly, gloriously unrestrained, the full gift of tongues fell upon David Joslin, as he stood there in the open street of a mountain village in a forgotten land! Suddenly the clouds cleared in front of him. He saw, and was content now with what he saw. Now he knew his life had not been in vain; that yet it might be of worth; that on ahead, if he should be spared to win it, lay the great, wide education of life and citizenship, and a share in the building and the keeping of a world! He spoke in such fashion that all his own longings, his own yearnings for his country and his people became apparent to them now, so that they listened in trust and awe and reverence; as well as in somber anger when he swung to the great summons. Had there been David Joslins throughout the land, the American Army

had been a matter of a week, a day, and we had not been laggard in Freedom's great day of peril.

"There's goin' to be a draft, a conscription," said the sergeant in explanation after a time.

"Draft be damned!" said Absalom Gannt, and spoke the mind of all. "Thar kain't nobody draft us, not even the Govern*ment*. We'll go ahead of ary draft."

"They won't let you go, Absalom. You're too old," said Sergeant Talley to him, smiling.

"Too old! Who—me? I'd like to see ary man tells me I'm too old to fight," rejoined that stark citizen.

"Twenty-one to thirty-one," smiled Sergeant Talley. "Up to forty, if you volunteer."

"Well, that lets me in, anyway," said Chan Bullock, and there were nods through the little crowd. Only the older men turned face to face, shaking their heads.

"It hain't no ways reas'ner'ble to let the boys go alone," said old Absalom Gannt. "It hain't no ways right, an' it wouldn't do—we'll all go out together, that's what we'll do! Davy Joslin, ye'll have to go, too—I reckon ye'll have to lead us—Outside."

"Well, we could make up a band of men," said Sergeant Talley, hesitating, "and go over to the examining officers at the station. A day's march, maybe."

"That's the talk!" said Absalom. "We'll all go out together. Davy, tell me," and he turned to him suddenly, "who is it we're a-fightin' with?"

And David told him as well as he might, suiting what he said to the understanding of these who heard.

"Give us a day, Sergeant, to fix things up at home," suggested Joslin now. "We'll not keep you long."

"Look at them *old* guys," grumbled the smart sergeant to his corporal, aside. "We don't want them along, but it don't look like we could head them off."

The color-bearer picked up his flag once more. The drummer pulled around his slings, and the fifer handled his instrument. The throb of the drum, the high note of the fife, passed down the street to yet another stand. And behind them, ragged, gaunt, unkempt, somewhat uncouth, fell in the band of the lost children, the men of the Cumberlands, now following the Flag, which had so long forgotten them.

CHAPTER XXV

STRANGERS WITHIN THE GATES

THE civic center of the village at the river forks might have been called the long building, in which were located the post-office and the blacksmith shop. It was here that, on the morning following, old Granny Joslin stood in the door, pipe in mouth, looking up the long street, which rambled down from the hills. Her gaze was fixed upon the approaching vehicle commonly known as the mail stage. It seemed to carry passengers this morning, an unusual thing, and the passengers themselves were such as to attract special attention of Granny Joslin and others.

That they were "furriners" Granny Joslin would have pronounced long ago. There were two women, both young, and their apparel, had it been worn by any of these parts, would distinctly have been recognized as "fotched on."

The two young women climbed down, unassisted, from the vehicle, and stood, perhaps as extraordinary a pair as ever had been seen thereabouts, in the dust of the street, looking about them curiously. The

younger of the two, with hands in pockets and feet just a trifle wide apart—a trim young woman and noticeable anywhere—was clad in well-cut traveling garb and tailored hat. She caught now in her gaze the old woman, who leaned against the side of the post-office door, silent and motionless, regarding these newcomers.

"Good-morning, Grandma," said she, not pertly, but with a certain easy assurance, which seemed to go naturally with her.

"Howdy, Ma'am," replied Granny Joslin, still with her pipe in her mouth.

"Is this the town," continued the young woman, "and if it isn't, where is it?"

"I reckon's as much as ary other place," admitted Granny.

"And where's the hotel?—the driver said there wasn't any." The latter, shaking his head, mystified, had stepped within, carrying his meager mailsacks.

"Hotel? Tavern, you mean? Well, now, he's done tolt ye the truth, Ma'am. There hain't no tavern here, none at all."

"What! And we've ridden twenty miles from the railroad because we couldn't find anything fit to eat there."

"It's tougher the furtherer in ye git," said Granny Joslin. "Ye orter see Hell-fer-Sartin, Ma'am. Ye're from the North, I reckon?"

The young woman nodded.

"Well, I reckon Granny Williams will take ye in, like enough. She's got another furrin womern in thar now."

"Oh, all right—that will be fine. Do you know what her rates are?"

"Rates, Ma'am?"

"How much she charges by the day, or maybe longer."

The old lady looked at her silently for some time, but at length answered with a certain calm dignity of her own.

"I don't reckon nobody would charge ye nothin' fer what ye et while ye was in here, Ma'am," said she. "Ye'd be welcome."

"What do you think of that, Nina?" chuckled the spokesman of the two new arrivals.

She turned again to the old woman. "Well," said she politely, "we want to do what's right. I just thought I'd ask you, you know. We're strangers here, all right enough. We wouldn't plan to stay long—maybe not more than a day or two."

"Who air ye?" demanded Granny Joslin succinctly. "Have ye heerd anything about the war outside? I heerd tell thar was some sort of diffikilty we-all was havin' with some other folks somewhars. I come down to see."

"War! Have we heard of the war! I should say

we hadn't heard of anything else!" rejoined the young woman. "It's put a crimp in business, all right—especially our business."

"What is yore business, Ma'am?" queried the old dame.

"We're players—actors—don't you see?—theatrical people—you know. And we've lost a perfectly good angel. That's why we're here."

This statement likewise seemed to Granny Joslin a most extraordinary one. She made no comment, as the speaker went on, feeling a trifle angered in the suspicion that these others were making sport of her.

"Well, it was the war that did that," said the young woman. "And here we are."

"Tell me, Madam," began the older of the two newcomers, seeing the perplexity of the old lady, "do you know of any one in here lately by the name of Haddon?"

Granny Joslin bent the calm gaze of her deep-set hazel eyes upon her.

"The furrin womern over to Granny Williams' house is name Haddon," said she after a time, "but her man, he hain't here no more now."

"Isn't here! Has he been here? When did he leave?" It was the younger woman who spoke again.

"He lef' a while back."

"Where did he go? Do you know?"

"No, I don't. The Lord only knows whar he went,

but he's daid all right. Up yander on the hill is whar he's buried at. His womern has been stayin' on here fer a little while yit, over to Granny Williams', like I done tolt ye."

Her close scrutiny saw consternation upon the faces of both the newcomers.

"But—you don't mean Mr. Haddon—you don't mean that Mr. James Haddon—*he* isn't dead, is he?"

"He sartinly is," replied Granny Joslin. "He was drownded down to the Narrers while he was a-comin' in here. They had a boat an' they come up from Windsor. Davy—that's my grandson—saved the corp, and he had a moughty hard time doin' it, too, let me tell ye. He liken to have drownded hisself. But Davy, he fotched the corp, anyways."

The two strangers looked at one another, horrified.

"We heard he came in that way," began the younger woman. "You see, we knew him very well. We wired to New York—don't you see, he was our partner, the backer of our company, as they say—we had a theatrical company on the road. Well, they told us he had started in for this place here. Then we didn't get any more word from his office. We weren't so far away from here by rail, so we started over—of course, if we'd come in the same way he did we would have heard of it—but we didn't. You see, Mr. Haddon was in business with us. Dead?—why—why—what'll we *do?*"

The old lady still regarded them both fixedly, her pipe still between her lips.

"What's yore name, Ma'am?" said she after a time. "Ye're mighty purty, 'pears like to me."

"They call me Polly Pendleton, Grandma," said the young woman. "I don't know your name—we don't know anything at all. What you say to us is terrible—it's awful."

"Yes, it's right hard," admitted Granny Joslin. "Say, Ma'am, tell me, did ye ever meet a young man from these parts? An' tell me, furthermore, air ye French and Irish mixed?"

Polly Pendleton suddenly flushed to her eyes. "What makes you ask that?" she demanded.

"I reckoned ye was," replied the old dame quietly. "Ye jest about come under a tall man's arm, too, don't ye? Ye're purty as a pictur. I don't know as I ever seed a purtier gal than ye, lessen it's the furrin woman over thar at Granny Williams' house right now. I'm French and Irish myself, too, Ma'am."

"How odd! I say, Grandma, what's your name—since we're getting acquainted now?"

"My name's Joslin, Ma'am. That thar young man I meant was Davy, my grandson, the same thet built the school buildin' up yander on the hill—biggest building ever was in these mountings. Now, I've heerd Davy talk of ye afore now, Ma'am. But I reckon ye've come in here fer another sort of man than Davy."

"Rather!" said Polly, a smile suddenly coming upon her troubled face in spite of all. "But Joslin—David Joslin—why, of course—I've seen him, yes. You're right—we didn't come in here after him."

The look of genuine perturbation upon the faces of the two young women proved to the ancient dame that the news they had heard was serious enough for them, whatever cause there might be. Polly Pendleton's dark eyes were a trifle dimmed as she turned once more.

"We're sorry—we're as sorry as we can be, Grandma," said she. "We hadn't any idea he was even sick. I don't know what to do. But I think we'll have to go back as soon as we can."

"Ye kain't git back afore to-morrer," said Granny. "But the fustest thing to do is to come in an' git something to eat. We'll go over to Granny Williams'. Ye must be tired, the both of ye. The roads is awful."

The shrug of Polly's shoulder was endorsement enough for this general statement, and Nina, usually the more silent, employed likewise now an eloquent exclamation.

"I don't believe the furrin womern has come back from up in the hills yit," said Granny Joslin.

She did not note the sudden relief which came upon the face of at least one of her auditors. "But that don't make no difference," she resumed. "Thar'll be plenty of room fer ye. If ye was up in my country

now, I'd have ye come home with me, but it's ten mile up the creek. I jest walked down this mornin' along of my mewel takin' sick a few days back."

"You walked—ten miles!"

"I sartinly did. But like I said, ye kain't walk that fer, bein' furriners. Why, chile, frail-like as ye air, ye'd be plumb beat out by that time, an' so would yore sister here—ye said yore sister, didn't ye?"

"She's more than that," said Polly Pendleton. "She's the only friend I've got now. We're both awfully obliged to you, Mrs. Joslin. We certainly are. We'd do as much for you."

"I believe ye would, myself," said Granny Joslin simply. "Ye'll be welcome here, so fer as what we got to give ye. We're all alike."

Polly Pendleton was pausing for a moment's thought. "We hadn't the slightest idea in the world, of course, or we'd never have come here. We—I don't think we want to bother Mrs. Haddon, you know. She'd rather be alone, I'm sure." She held back, hesitating.

"She's a fine womern, Ma'am, accordin' to Davy," rejoined the old woman. "He says she's the finest he ever seed, and he's been Outside and seed a power of things in his time, Davy has."

"Well," broke in Polly Pendleton, now with a certain asperity, "one thing, she can't be any hungrier than I am right now."

"So long as ye kin eat ye're a-goin' to survive your sorrer, Ma'am, I always heerd," rejoined Granny Joslin grimly. "Well, come along. We all got to die some time, come to that."

She placed her pipe in her pocket now, after knocking out the ashes, and started out forthwith in the lead, her bent and bony body, shrunken and battered under the weight of years and infirmity, scarce as tall as Polly Pendleton by half a head. Her course was across the street along which, further down, lay the house of Granny Williams.

"Well, Nina, old dear," commented Polly, *sotto voce*, as they followed, "things couldn't be much worse, could they? Poor chap—isn't it a horrible thing? And we never knew a word!"

Her uncommunicative comrade only nodded, her face drawn into lines none too happy now, for she it was, of the firm of Pendleton and Stanton, who usually was the more concerned with the business affairs.

"And here's his wife in here, too—that makes it a lot harder," she said at length. "I've a picture of how much she loves you, Polly! There's plenty of places I'd rather be in than right here now, my dear!"

"Well, I'm hungry," resumed Polly once more, trying to shake off care, as always. "Is this the place, Grandma?" she added, hurrying up now and giving

a hand to the old dame's elbow, as she turned in at the steep walk behind the gate.

"It's the place, Ma'am," said Granny Joslin. "Come on in. Whether Granny Williams is home or not ye'll be welcome in her house. It hain't never locked."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE UNCERTIFIED

GRANNY JOSLIN was accurate in one statement regarding her neighbor's household, but was not so accurate in other details. Had Polly Pendleton known surely that Marcia Haddon was in the house she now approached, she certainly must have turned and gone the other way. And had Marcia herself suspected the presence in town of these two visitors of all in the world, it is most likely that she would have prolonged her visit in the hills indefinitely, and not have returned earlier in the day, as had been the case.

In her room, Marcia Haddon heard voices—voices of the two old women, voices of two younger women —one voice which caused her to stop and listen—all her faculties arrested.

It was Granny Williams who after a time knocked at her door and called her out to meet the newcomers. Marcia, with sudden prescience of what was to come, summoned all her fortitude for what seemed to her the unkindest blow she ever had known of fate. This woman—here—following her to the edge of the world

—to her husband's very grave-side—it was a thing unspeakable in its unfitness! Her very soul rebelled against it.

Her color was high as she stepped out into the room, facing what she felt must be an encounter. "You asked for me?" said she, looking directly into the face of Polly Pendleton. "I think there must be some mistake." Her eyes now passed calmly from one to the other, her face cold.

Polly, quick of wit, did what she could. "Mrs. Haddon," said she impulsively, "we didn't know you were here when we came in. We didn't know you were in town. It's all a mistake—everything's a mistake. We wanted to go away right now—but they wouldn't let us—there's no other place for us. Won't you let me talk to you now? May we——"

Her gesture indicated the room from which Marcia had but now emerged, which seemed to offer privacy for what Polly Pendleton as well as herself knew was to be a scene.

"As you like," said Marcia Haddon icily, and held open the door, closing it as the other entered.

"It's all a mistake, Mrs. Haddon," began Polly once more as she found herself alone with the other.

"So it would seem," replied Marcia, still coldly. "Not one of my own making."

"We didn't know a thing about it, Mrs. Haddon. I'm sorry, awfully sorry—sorry as I can be."

"You would seem to have cause for regret, perhaps? I suppose you refer to my husband's death?"

Polly nodded rapidly, her upper lip trembling a little bit. The situation was not in the least easy for her.

"I can fancy it would mean something to you."

"A lot," said Polly frankly, "an awful lot. But what's the use! He was backing us, of course, you know that—had been for a long while. We wanted help—we're on our uppers now. We heard he was in here, and we came in ourselves to have a little talk with him over things. We were over on the railroad, don't you see? We've had bad business all along for weeks. The war knocked us out. Oh, I tell you, we knew nothing about *this*—we hadn't heard of any accident. And Jimmy was such a good chap!"

"I presume you refer to my husband when you say Jimmy? Yes?" Marcia's voice was not only icy, but worse.

"Well," resumed Polly uneasily, "I've known him for a long time, you see."

"I know all about the length—and the nature—of your acquaintance with my husband, Miss Pendleton."

"My real name is Amanda Brown," said Polly, calmly.

"Yes, Miss Brown? I don't know whether or not my husband has made any provision for you in his will. I haven't been made fully acquainted with the

nature of his will. My lawyers have asked me to come back at once, but I have been stopping on here. It was hard—I was not quite ready to go away from him. He needed some one to watch him, don't you think?

"Now," she went on, "I have been obliged to meet you——"

"Well," said Polly, with a shrug, "we wouldn't have been so apt to meet back in the city."

"Hardly, I fear."

Polly reddened a little at this. "You don't like me, Mrs. Haddon, do you?" said she directly.

"Why should I?"

"That's right—why should you, when it comes to that? I'm not sure that I should if it were the other way about. But one thing is sure——"

"Need we discuss these matters at all? I don't see why. This whole situation is not in the least of my making, or my liking."

"Oh, now, listen, Mrs. Haddon! I know a lot of things. I'm not what you are—I never had your chance. I've done the best I could with what I had, the same as you, maybe. If I had married him you'd never have taken him away from me!"

"Indeed?" Her auditor did not even smile.

"Women like you," broke out Polly, waxing somewhat tremulous herself—"women like you don't know anything about women like me. I didn't run after

Jimmy Haddon—he ran after me. Why did he? What made him? Didn't you have every chance in the world to keep him? Who's to blame—me or you or him—or all of us? I wasn't running after him so much even now. Of course I didn't know anything about what has happened, or I wouldn't have come."

Marcia's hands were intertwining nervously now. "Do you think I ought to talk to you at all now—coming here as you do—following him absolutely into his grave?"

"I wish you wouldn't," said Polly, coloring hotly now. "Maybe I'm not as bad as you think—or anyway, different. If men drift to my sort, how can my sort help it? I'm only a rag and a bone and a hank my own self, I suppose. If it hadn't been him it would have been someone else, maybe. If it hadn't been me, maybe it would have been someone else for him too—that's the way it goes."

Marcia Haddon was looking at the young woman before her with a new and strange feeling of curiosity, trying after her own ancient creed to be fair, to be just. She was trying now to understand, to find as much good as possible in the careless self-accusation of the young person who spoke thus artlessly and directly. But that young person went on now somewhat bitterly.

"We're a good ways apart, Mrs. Haddon, I expect

I hadn't a thing to start with but my laugh and my looks—they would have left me comfortable if I'd never met your husband. If he's gone now, all the better for me now, like enough, and all the better for him—and maybe for you too. You don't know about my sort. Well, I don't ask that of you. There's milk, and fresh milk, and bottled milk, and certified bottled milk. You're strictly respectable—you're certified—you're the sort that's been taken care of all their lives. Me—I'm uncertified, I guess. It doesn't make much difference to anybody now, does it? I told—him—another man—I was going over with the Red Cross."

Still striving to be just in spite of all, Marcia Haddon held her speech, looking gravely at the other, who now went on, unsparing alike of herself and her hearer.

"It's late to give you a tip about how to handle a husband—but I could have——"

"I'm afraid not," said Marcia Haddon. "I'm afraid there's nothing you can do for me. I'm afraid—well, I suppose I ought to try to be fair, even now." She could not refer directly in speech to the relations between the dead yonder and the living here.

"That never gets anybody very much," said Polly Pendleton. "You remind me of that chap that came into my place in New York—Joslin, his name was—he's the grandson of this old lady that brought us in here!"

Now for the first time the slow red of anger rose to Marcia Haddon's face.

"I think you've said quite sufficient about that and many other matters," said she. "You certainly can't discuss Mr. Joslin with me—I'll not have it. In fact, I'm not sure that you can discuss anything with me any longer.

"I've asked no odds of you," she flared out, at last. "If you took my husband from me, you took my leavings—there was nothing about him that I cared for any more. Anything worth trying for—anything worth fighting for—why, yes—I don't know that I'd need fear you so much. You came into my life not by my invitation, but I'm not so sure you need ask me so much for forgiveness. What have I to forgive—or you? He's dead now—he's gone from both of us. You're welcome to what you had."

Her gaze unconsciously passed beyond the window, up to the hillside where lay a little mound, a rude stone at the head.

"We'll not say anything evil about him now—more than we have. He's found the way out, even if we haven't as yet for ourselves. Our ways must part, of course. But you can't advise me and you can't glory over me. You've had my leavings. Is that quite plain?

"And now the way is plain for all of us—at last." Her voice was trembling.

It was like Marcia Haddon to stand erect, her features controlled, though tears dropped from her eyes. And it was like Polly Pendleton to grasp both her hands and kiss her, when, sobbing, she fumbled for her small belongings as she turned to go.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SEEKING

THE unusual sounds of the street still came to the ears of all in the little village, but Marcia Haddon, agitated, held to her own room and tried to rest, to forget. She was aroused by the sudden advent of Granny Williams herself.

"Come on out here, Ma'am," said that worthy. "I want ye to meet Davy's granny—old Granny Joslin. She's come down to talk things over today. Them two young wimmern has went away. They said they couldn't stay, so I sont 'em over to the blacksmith's to stop. So set down an' talk to Davy's granny, Ma'am."

Marcia was not prepared for the vision that met her gaze. Old Granny Joslin was old, very much older even than Granny Williams, more bent, less active, more afflicted by the blows of life and fate. Indeed, of late, Granny Joslin had seemed to all scarce so savage as of old, a trifle more bent than she had been in all her life before. Her eye was less fierce, as now she took the young woman's hand in her own skinny, horny palm and looked into her eyes as straight as a hawk might.

"So ye air the furrin womern that Davy tolt me about," said she. "Well, ye're right purty, that's shore."

"Hain't she, though!" affirmed Granny Williams. "Hain't she, though!—an' gittin' purtier right along. If only she'd taken a few doses of camomile an' sage, I'd 'a' had her ready by now so's she could do a day's work. She's powerful triflin', Granny." Even old women called Granny Joslin "Granny," for she was older than the oldest of them.

But Granny Joslin for some reason seemed softened quite beyond her wont. "I'm glad to see ye, Ma'am," said she. "I'm sorry ye lost yore man down at the Narrers. Hit's a powerful mean place fer a man to git in—thar's a heap of graves around thar—men lost from the rafts at the Narrers. Davy's tolt me, many's the time."

Marcia Haddon did not make any response.

"Davy tolt me all about ye, too," continued the old woman. "I know ye must be moughty lonesome in here. When air ye goin' back, Ma'am?"

"I don't know," said Marcia Haddon. "I've been here longer than I had planned—I ought to go any time—I must go now."

"Did ye hear the playin' in the street right now?" asked the old woman suddenly. "Has the war came up North as well as here?"

"Yes, Mrs. Joslin. It's an awful, awful thing."

"Well, I don't know," rejoined that worthy dame. "Men jest has to do a sartin amount of fightin' aryways, an' now they kin git plenty. They'd orter. Davy was the head man of our fam'ly ontel he went away, an' then Chan Bullock, he taken it on—an' now not even Chan seems to hev ary bit of sand left. Ma'am, he's been livin' right along here, they tell me, sleepin' right alongside of old Absalom Gannt, an' he nuvver got him yit!

"I jest sort of wandered in town today to see what I could do my own self. An' now what do I see? Why, old Absalom Gannt an' David Joslin an' Chan Bullock a-marchin' down the street arm in arm, ye mought say, follerin' the music! What kin I do? I say, the war it's a massy—jest so old Absalom gits killed somewhar, I don't keer how it happens!"

"They're brave men," said Marcia Haddon, her eyes suddenly kindling. "Why, look what he did—your grandson—down there at the Narrows."

"Well, he anyways saved the corp," assented Granny Joslin, nodding. "Like enough couldn't no man of done much more'n that."

"Davy's a-goin 'out, I reckon," said Granny Williams now, reaching for a coal for her pipe, and offering it in turn to the other old dame, still held between the tips of her horny fingers.

"Of course he'll go," grumbled his granddam. "Joslins kain't stay out'n ary war. I reckon that'll

put a stop to his colledge up on the hill, huh? We got to wait now till we lick them Dutch a-plenty—they tell me it's the Dutch we're a-goin' to fight."

"If thar ever was any talk that Davy was a-skeered," commented Granny Williams presently, "I reckon it'll be stopped now."

"Nobody but a fool would ever say a Joslin was a-skeered of arything!" broke out the other old dame fiercely. "If he was a-skeered, would he of done called them people together down at the mill house a purpose to taken a shot at him if they wanted ter? If he was a-skeered, would he of went up to the door of the stillhouse, come two year back, an' called old Absalom out? Only pity is he didn't kill Absalom then—well, as I said, jest so Absalom gits killed some way, I hain't no wise pertic'lar."

"That's right, Granny," nodded Granny Williams with approval, shifting her cob pipe to her hand. "That's the proper sperrit of a Christian. An' I like to hear ye say it thataway."

"Well," she went on, sighing, "our own fam'ly hain't got skercely a quarl left no more, sence my son Andy kilt the last Purrin over on Newfound a few year back. If I was sitiwated like ye air, Granny, I'd feel jest the same as ye do. I kin forgive all them Purrins now jest as easy as not—sence they're all daid. Forgiveness is what they preach in the church house.

"But now, Granny"—as the older woman sat star-

ing moodily into the fire—"how come hit that yore Davy hain't nuvver had no speakin' yit down to the church house at the Creek? We're jest perishin' in here fer some right good preachin'. Onct in a while Preacher Bonnell he opens a meetin' fer three or four days, an' sometimes Old Man Parkins from up Redbird, he comes round here in his circuit. An' thar's a young man over in Leslie that they say is right promisin', an' he mought come over afore long. But thar hain't been to say no religious *awakenin'* in here, so to speak, fer a long time. An' Davy—ye know he started out fer to be a preacher, him with his education an' all. Why don't he *preach?*"

"Yes, why don't he?" demanded Granny Joslin savagely. "I taken that all up with Davy, an' I kain't do a damn thing with him. He says—well, what do you-all think he says to me?"

"I kain't guess," said Granny Williams. "He's always been odd."

"He says he ain't *good* enough to preach!" exclaimed the fierce old woman who turned towards her. "He says, 'I hain't got my edication yit,' says he to me."

"Men is natural cantankerous," said Granny Williams, nodding her head sagely. "Why the Lord made 'em that way, the Lord only knows."

"Davy won't have no chance to preach anyhow if he goes to the war," resumed Granny Joslin. "I

reckon the school'll all go to hell now. Has he said ary thing to ye about the school, Ma'am?" She turned suddenly now to Marcia Haddon.

"No," rejoined that individual, somewhat startled; "nothing at all. I've not seen him for several days."

"He tolt me ye was the wife of the man that owned the Company—an' the Company owns all this land in here. Well, like I said, I reckon that school'll have to go to hell now—an' yit we certainly did need it—that school. Hit was—*our* school, the fustest in the Cumberlands."

Marcia Haddon vouchsafed no comment, and presently old Granny Joslin rose.

"Well, I got to be gittin' on, Sarah Alice," said she to her friend. "I want to find Davy somewhar—I've brung him down some caraway cookies. He always liked 'em. An' I brung him a clean handkerchief—he's got to have a heap of things if he's a-goin' off ter the war. I don't know who them Dutch air—fer's I know thar hain't no Dutch in these mountings noways—but if we've got to lick 'em, I reckon we'd just as well be about it. Damn 'em anyways, whoever they air!" With which candid comment she hobbled on out the door, and never gave a parting glance as she faced up the street and started for her cabin home.

Granny Williams looked through the window after her departing guest. "Ho hum!" said she. "Thar goes the last of the Joslins—of the real Joslins. She

was the fightin'est one of 'em all, but she allus was a good Christian womern."

"Why hain't Davy come down here no more lately, Ma'am?" she asked suddenly of her silent guest.

"I don't know in the least," replied Marcia Haddon. "Does it matter?" Then, relenting: "I wish he would come! I ought to see him before he goes away, or before I go."

"Why?" asked Granny Williams directly.

"I've got to be going. I'm a widow, you see, now, Granny—I'm alone! I've been thinking a good deal."

"What ye been thinkin', child?"

Marcia Haddon, with a strange humility, laid one of her soft white hands upon the wrinkled one reposing in the old dame's lap. "I'll tell you—I've been thinking about that little child we met up there in the cave."

The old woman nodded.

"What will that child and all the others do if the school stops?"

"Oh, Davy'll come back," said Granny Williams—"he's *got* to come back."

"If we had buildings, and teachers, and everything," mused her guest, "we could take care of any number."

"Hit'd be a powerful fine thing for everybody," said Granny Williams after a time of silence. "Now, Davy—he's so *odd,* Ma'am. I've seen Davy Joslin set like he was in a dream. If only men wasn't so cantankerous!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE EDUCATION OF DAVID JOSLIN

THE hours dragged leaden for the women, cooped up, silent, as in the old block-house days, but for the men the great adventure of going out to war, born in their ancient Highland blood, sped the time rapidly enough. It cost a certain resolution on the part of David Joslin to call upon the "furrin woman," but now he must say good-by. Therefore in time he knocked at the door of Granny Williams' log house.

Marcia Haddon herself met him, as though she had sent for him. "Come," said she. But she led him not into the house itself.

He walked at her side, silent, as she directed her footsteps toward the little steps cut into the foot of the hill. They sat here, both looking out now across the valley to the hills beyond.

The woman's gray eyes were wistful and sad. The eyes of the man, resting everywhere but upon her face, were also sad. He did not turn to look at her at all—apparently did not note the increasing goodliness of her figure and her rounder contours, the browner col-

oring of her cheek. She was a very comely woman, Marcia Haddon, young, but wiser than she once had been—more impulsive also, less cold, less reserved. It was as though she entered a new stage of womanhood, as yet denied her in her chill years of self-repression. Never until now had she really known the awakening of woman. Virginal, warming, fluttering, she was not married woman or widow now; she was a girl, a girl at the brink of life. Oh! how vast and sweet the revealing Plan seemed now to her.

"Well, you're going out," said she at last, the first to break the silence.

"Yes, I'm going out." His voice was low and deep. It seemed to her that she now for the first time realized its even vibrancy.

At last: "What will become of the work here?" she began.

"I can't tell as to that, Mrs. Haddon," said he. "It must wait." She made no reply, and he went on:

"You see, all my life has been pretty much the same thing. I've always had to look ahead and did not dare look at things between. Once this school up here on the hill was all I looked at—and there wasn't anything between. There's other work afoot that's even bigger, now. Maybe after that I'll be fit for this."

"You've done wonderfully well. It's scarce less than a miracle—how you've got on."

"At least I've told you all about myself," said he

after a time. "I've nothing more to say—now or at any other time."

"You need say nothing," she rejoined. "Life goes hard for all of us sometimes." She was conscious of her banality, but found herself, as so often, dumb in her largest emotions.

"It was a hard enough start," he assented. "It's hard enough for all of us in here. I'm not so old."

"No. You only seem old to me. I suppose that's because you have had to do so much in so short a time. But I'm older, too. It's a sad country—did you ever stop to think how few people smile, down here in these mountains?"

"Yes, I know; and you know, now. Well, I suppose you'll go away and forget us. We've been forgotten, more than a hundred years. That's hard—to be forgotten."

"Do you think that of me?" she said, still staring straight down the valley.

"I hardly know what to think of you," said he, deliberately. "You are not like any woman I ever knew." He flushed, suddenly remembering he had told her he never had known but three women in his life.

"Well, be fair, at least. Be sure you know my point of view. This work ought not to stop." She was trying to look at him from the corner of her eye.

"The Lord has built that building up on the hill, Mrs. Haddon," answered David Joslin. "I suppose the

Lord will continue it or destroy it. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

She half turned her face toward him now as she replied.

"I've told you I've been a useless woman all my life. Well, just the other day I saw a child—a little child, out in the hills—it lived wild, in a cave. I held its hand right in mine, this way—don't you see? And then, I thought, there were hundreds of them—hundreds, all through these hills." She was flushing.

"Yes," said he; "many hundreds."

"Then I thought of the money that's mine that maybe oughtn't all to be mine. You see, I've counsel—lawyers—that sort of thing—men who would help me in anything I asked. Suppose we had some more buildings, and plenty of teachers after a time?"

He did not make any answer at all, and she was obliged to go on unaided.

"In this awful time of the world, Mr. Joslin," said she, "everyone ought to be useful. We'll need more good citizens in America. All of us women ought to work in some way. The country must go on, until we've won. Where could I be more useful than here? Don't you think I could keep the work going some way until—until you came back, David Joslin?"

Still he did not answer, and still she went on, struggling somewhat desperately with his native reticence and her own.

"Why, they say this is a war for democracy, don't you know? And where could we fight better for democracy? Wasn't that your ambition—wasn't that your dream?"

"Yes!" suddenly he exclaimed, hoarsely. "That was my dream! You know how it ended—you know why. I killed my own school, you know how."

"Yes—you've spoken very freely. It's just as well. These are days when there's no time to be lost. And I'd like you to know, at least how much I've marveled at what you've done."

"Marveled!" said he. "It's I who have marveled. But what you say—if you could keep the school going—why, *that's* a miracle!"

"Well," said Marcia Haddon quietly, "you've always spoken of miracles as matter of course."

"Maybe we'd better not talk much more," said he after a time, long silences seeming natural now. "I told you I wasn't through. I've sinned, and I'll repent. I'm ignorant—but I'm going out now to get the rest of my education. If I am spared . . . some time . . . I've told you about the other woman up there," he finished, anguished. "As you know—she's dead."

"Is she dead forever, David Joslin?" asked Marcia Haddon quietly. The color in her own cheek was warm.

"Yes, forever. And I'll not speak any ill of her memory."

"Nor I of the memory of the man that's dead," said she slowly. "It's life, I suppose."

"Yes, that's life! And I want it—*all,* every bit of it, all that any man ever coveted or had—*all* of a man's dues in life. Yes, I want it—*all!*"

He spoke now with a sudden fierceness, his gray eyes aflame in a way she had not seen, that indomitableness of the inner man now showing through as never yet she had seen him, so that she felt a thrill, a shock, as of some vast, measureless dynamo of power suddenly awaking. "All life is the same thing. It's *all* an education, *all* a growing—God! Give me my chance to grow! Let me get ready, so I can deserve. I've been *hungry* all my life—hungry for the world—hungry for my education—hungry for all a man's life—love, happiness, content, power, usefulness. I'm hungry for this war, even, because I know it will teach me something or leave me at last at peace. I've not known peace. I've lived in torment—I'm in torment now. But I'll come back bigger and better if I ever come back at all. Life—why, life——"

He halted, his drawn brows turned away.

"That little child that came up to me," began Marcia Haddon hastily, as though irrelevantly—"if I could do something in the meantime—while you were out there—why, I'd be the happiest woman in all the world Yes, I! And I'd said good-by to happiness, the same as you." Her eyes were soft now.

"If I thought that could be," he answered slowly, "I'd know the end even of this war—I'd know the end of my own fight—I'd know that justice and good *do* triumph over all and through all. Oh, what a dream! And for my people—the forgotten, the mocked, the helpless ones. If I—if *you* and I——"

"I'm going now," he concluded, long later. "These are things in which I can't give you counsel. You're the one real woman I ever knew in all my narrow life—the one real woman. I reckon I've seen them all now. I wanted to tell you that, before I went away—I *had* to tell you! If only I had lived so that you wouldn't think so ill of me. Oh, my God! Always I do the evil thing when I would do the right. I'm so impatient. It's so hard for me to be patient now."

He rose and stood facing straight ahead. The twilight now was falling softly upon the hills. Sounds came from the street below—sounds unwelcome.

"Good-by," said he, suddenly. "I'll love you all my life!"

"Going?" Her voice seemed not yet to accept it after all. She half raised a hand. The blood of her cheek surged back.

"Yes—to finish my education!"

He stalked away, never looking back.

She sat alone now, still gazing out across the hills, at a new and wider world than any she had ever known.

The sounds on the street below became more audible, wafted by a change in the evening air. She knew that there was forming yonder a procession of men who presently would pass out around the shoulder of the hill at the end of the street. And then at last she heard fully the throb of the drum, the keening of the fife. The men of the Cumberlands were marching out into the world. He was at their head—going out for his ordeal, going out to grow, to get ready—to deserve, as he had said. What a man he would be—what a man he was!

Marcia Haddon suddenly reached out her arms, her gesture following the marching men, as though something of her own had gone out with them. She sat, until she knew not whether she heard the throb of a passing drum or felt the pulse of a new heart, beating high and strong. Her Work lay at hand—out there, on the hills where the gaunt buildings grew. And on ahead—was it Life, as sweet as it was earnest and compelling, that rested yonder—on the heights ahead?

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